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THE FORCE AWAKENS TO OSCAR ISAAC

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THE COMPLETE

2016 STYLE OVER- HAUL

COOL JESUS

INSIDE THE
CHURCH OF
LATTER-DAY
HIPSTERS

THE TEEN- AGER WHO FELL TO EARTH

MEET
LUCKY
BLUE

THE SECOND
COMING OF
DAVID
BOWIE



BLACK LABEL



Ah yes, The Zone.
You remember that
place where you relax
your body and mind just
enough to shape those
random little notions
into something
useful.

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LOUIS VUITTON



Ring Command bezel

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A man and a woman stand on a rocky shore, looking up at a vibrant display of the aurora borealis in a starry night sky. The aurora shows bright green and purple streaks. In the background, a calm lake reflects the lights, with snow-capped mountains and a small town visible under the dark sky.

THE PLACES YOU GO SHOULD
TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY,
ESPECIALLY THE
DRIVER'S SEAT.

Toyota Avalon

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Go
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THE COVER

On Oscar Isaac
Suit, \$1,795, and tie, \$145, by **Emporio Armani**. Shirt, \$375, by **Giorgio Armani**. Pocket square by **Brunello Cucinelli**. Hair by Vi Sapyyapy using Leonor Greyl. Grooming by Kumi Craig using Tom Ford for Men. Contributing stylist: Kelly McCabe for Art Department. Produced by Tricia Sherman for Baovie Productions. Local production by Kiku Xicoira for BCN Skies Productions. Photographed at Hotel Carmen, Granada, Spain.

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📷 **Nathaniel Goldberg**

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Suit jacket, \$1,570, and polo shirt, \$675, by **Paul Smith**. Jeans, \$55, by **Topman**. Boots by **Prada**. Necklace and watch by **Tiffany & Co.** Bracelet by **Dior Homme**.

📷 SEBASTIAN KIM

A full-page advertisement featuring Tom Brady. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with a small white 'H' logo on the left chest. He is holding a brown leather football in his right hand, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky.

#DontCrackUnderPressure



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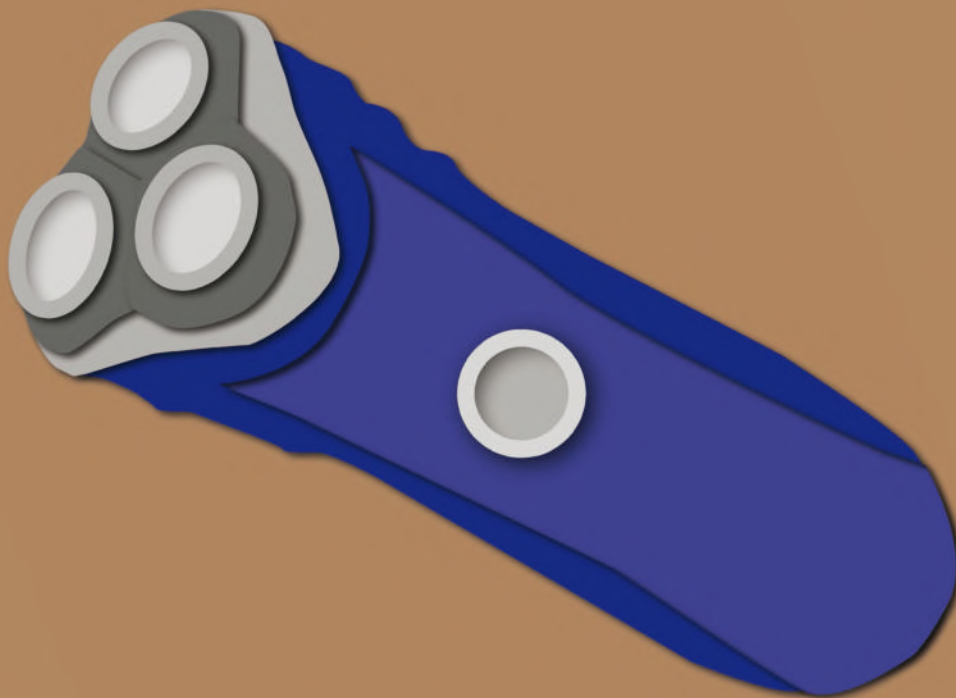
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Manual

Look Sharp | Live Smart

→ 1 of 5



GQ
Endorses

The Boldest Winter on Record

• In an El Niño'd, global-weirding world where temperatures fluctuate out of control, you need layers of sweaters, vests, and coats of varying weights. You need thick socks and sturdy scarves. And you need color. Lots of it. Where you'd usually gravitate to browns, blacks, grays, and navy, instead look for tomato red (in your puffer), sunshine yellow (on your hat), and electric blue (even if it's just your boot laces). In other words: Dress for the spring you want, not the winter you have. Then turn the page for the rest of GQ's cold-weather survival guide, full of tips, tricks, and all the *stuff* that'll get you through nature's worst. —JIM MOORE

Bag \$49 Poler | Key strap \$49 Carhartt WIP | Sunglasses \$290 Starck Eyes | Hat \$29 Askov Finlayson | Gloves \$50 Hestra
Socks \$40 Anonymous Ism | Boots \$860 Visvim | Sweater \$98 J.Crew | Snowboard \$320 Burton x Neighborhood
Jacket \$225 Penfield | Scarf \$119 Smart Turnout | Where to buy it? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories



THE BOLDEST WINTER

Frostbite This Style

THE GOODS

Winter Hats with Balls

Only question is: Do you have what it takes to wear one?



—> Yes, that thing up top is a pom-pom, and yes, we know saying that phrase out loud makes you feel like a 9-year-old. Luckily, everything else about these hats has grown up since Mom jammed one on your head as you ran to catch the bus. They're now made by higher-end designers using softer, cozier wools—meaning no more sudden-onset head itch. The patterns can be just as electric as always, but now muted options are in the mix, too, like that Gucci black-and-olive number above. Wear one with whatever, and wherever, you damn well please. (Mom will be happy.)
—SAM SCHUBE

● Hat \$295 Gucci
● Hat \$375 Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane
Where to buy it?
Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories



> I have a pair of kick-ass winter boots that easily get me to and from work in even the craziest snowstorm. But I always feel weird wearing them in the office. Are there any snow boots that work with a suit, or do I look as strange as I feel?

» You look as strange as you feel. Doubly so if you're the only guy sitting in the conference room who's wearing calf-high wool-lined moon boots. Here's the secret to your salvation: office shoes. (The crowd gasps!) Yes, office shoes. In the same way people have an office phone charger, office toothbrush, and office wife, you need a pair of shoes that can work with your work attire but never leave the office. They should be universal and comfortable, like a simple pair of black bluchers. I usually cycle in a pair of older shoes in case I have to go outside and subject them to salt and snow. Spread the secret, my brother.



Winterize Your Face

50 ml., \$27; kiehls.com

All the warm clothes on these pages won't help if you've got a wind-and-snow-beaten mug. Upgrade your moisturizer to something blizzard-grade with **Ultra Facial Deep Moisture Balm** from Kiehl's. It's loaded with extract from the Alpine edelweiss flower, which somehow manages to thrive in hellaciously wind-battered, frost-covered conditions. With any luck, you will, too.



IT'S ALL MIND OVER MERCURY

Hey, Green Bay Packers fullback and pro hard-ass John Kuhn: How do you stay warm on the frozen tundra?

“On the field, you're running around, so you don't feel it until you're on the sidelines—where we have big heaters, chicken broth, piping-hot apple cider. Those are some of the secrets. Some guys have special balms on their skin to help keep their pores closed. And sometimes we actually practice in a colder environment—the practice facility is windy, and it doesn't really have any shelter or accessible heaters. Makes the game seem warmer. Once you've done it a few times, it really isn't too difficult. It's mental. You get acclimated. Turns out you can push yourself to some pretty extreme lengths.” —AS TOLD TO JEFF VRABEL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM SCHIRMACHER

STYLIST: KELLY MCCABE AT ART DEPARTMENT; HAIR: THOM PRIANO AT GARREN NEW YORK FOR R+CO; MAKEUP: KUMI CRAIG FOR SISLEY PARIS; ILLUSTRATIONS: FROM TOP: JEAN-MICHEL TIXIER; MICHAEL HOEWELER; TOP LEFT, COAT AND SHIRT: GUCCI; BOTTOM LEFT, JACKET: BURBERRY; TURTLENECK: MICHAEL KORS; STILL LIVES: JOSEPHINE SCHIELE (6). PROP STYLIST: ELIZABETH OSBORNE AT HALLEY RESOURCES.

YOUR NEXT
MOVE**The Secret
to Pulling
Off the
Look-at-Me
Sweater**

STEP 1:

Stay far, far
away from appliqué
reindeer

• We get why you've shied away from big-patterned sweaters. All those goofy "ugly Christmas sweater" holiday parties, all those ironic Facebook photos by your theater-major friends. Patterned winter sweaters are so hard to wear, the thinking goes, that the best angle of attack is to veer all the way into self-parody. But that's flawed thinking. The patterned sweater lives, in all its geometric, attention-getting glory—and it may be your best weapon against chronic winter-closet boredom.

First, you need the right one: something woolen and hefty, with graphics that ditch cartoonish fauna for shapes a kindergartner could draw. Then—and here's that secret we mentioned—pull on a wintry sport coat over the top. There, now you've grounded that.—S.S.

**Pop Winter in the Face**

Don't be afraid of the rainbow. Just know that the more colors you pack into a sweater, the simpler your jacket should be.

Sweater \$1,190 Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane | Jacket J.Crew Ludlow

**Hit the Bars**

Finally someone realized that Rothko's artistic genius looks just as awesome on your chest.

Sweater \$180 Reiss | Jacket Tom Ford

**Black-and-White and Whoa All Over**

Straight-up go for it by matching a busy pattern to a busy (in this case herringbone) jacket.

Sweater \$1,695 Ralph Lauren | Jacket Polo Ralph Lauren

**Lightning Strikes Thrice**

The perfect sweater: a classic ski-slope pattern in a dark-and-cool downtown color palette.

Sweater \$150 Club Monaco | Jacket Eleventy

**Shades for Sore Eyes**\$600, vuarnet.com

Vuarnet, French eyewear brand and purveyor of eternal ski-slope cool, launched half a century ago. Its reborn Glacier model, with the Croakies-esque lanyard and glare-blocking leather eyecups, is that rare piece that looks simultaneously modern and coolly vintage. Which means it'll look sharp whether you're on a ski run or on a coffee run.



David Chang's Kitchen >All Rise! And Hail the Age of Perfect Bread

There's never been a better time to carbo-load, Chef Chang says, because bread has never been more delicious, more creative, and more worth your hard-earned dough



• Way back in the primordial days of **Momofuku Ssäm Bar**, I bought a stash of high-end butters—goat butter milked by flaxen virgins, cultured butter from Vermont as delicious as foie gras, all the awesome butter I could buy. The next day I realized there was no way I could cook with it. It was too expensive!

So we bought the best baguette we could find and put "bread and butter" on the menu for \$9. It wasn't the end of shitty bread and foil-wrapped pats of Land O'Lakes, but I think we helped draw a line in the sand. And I was surprised at how many diners understood that

great bread was worth the price.

A decade later, we're deep into the Bread Worth Your Money movement. No meal at **Mission Chinese** in Manhattan is complete without their hot discs of bread with cultured kefir butter; the sourdough at **Semilla** in Brooklyn is arguably the most delicious course in a strong tasting menu.

Bakeries, too, have never been better. The greatest of them all is **Tartine Bakery** in San Francisco, where Chad Robertson has taught legions, many of whom have left to open their own places, spreading the gospel of great bread everywhere.

If I were getting into cooking right now, I'd become a baker. Not just because it's creatively fulfilling, although that's definitely part of it. More because people finally get that great bread should be *on* the menu—not something you absently nibble as you peruse it.

DRINK

This Winter, Your Drink Is So Not Chill

→ For roughly ever, cocktails—particularly in Bond films and vodka ads—have been categorized as either shaken (with ice) or stirred (with ice). There were gimmicky hot drinks, but really, it's been about the chill. Lately, though, bartenders at drink havens like **Midnight Rambler** in Dallas and **Holiday Cocktail Lounge** in N.Y.C. are ditching the ice to make what they call room-temperature cocktails. Trust us—they're better than the name implies.

In the absence of taste-bud-numbing, flavor-diluting cubes, you catch every boozy nuance. Our favorite, the **Fireside Chat** at New York's **Porchlight**, is a holy amalgam of gin-like Bols Genever and nutty liqueurs. And like all these "neat" cocktails, it's as easy to make as it is to down. —MARK BYRNE

TOO HOT!

JUST RIGHT!

TOO COLD!



Fireside Chat

Porchlight, N.Y.C.

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz. Bols Genever
 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Becherovka
 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. Amaretto
1 tsp. Nux Alpina (or any walnut liqueur)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. water
Orange peel

Directions

1> Pour the liquids into a brandy snifter and stir.
2> "Express" the orange peel over the drink—basically twist so a little of the aromatic oil gets in the glass (but not in your eye)—then discard.
3> Drink, in multiples.

WHAT SHE SAID

Master the Art of Netflixing Around

→ It's so cute when teens come up with language for something the rest of us have been doing for years, like self-portraiture or standing sixty-nine. Such is the case with "Netflix and chill," the hookup term du sort-of-jour. Netflix and chill is what it sounds like: the time-honored

tradition of inviting a date to watch a movie at your place so you can be in some kind of recumbent position together. Simple, sure, but it requires some finesse. Know this: The key to Netflix and chill is the chill.

Don't choose to watch anything either too unsexy or too sexy, because nobody needs the

pressure that comes from the advanced sexual antics of *The Americans* or sci-fi shows with blow-job-bots. Let some tension build before making your move, even if there's serious hand-creeping going on under the vintage handwoven Navajo throw blanket you're sharing. Finally, wait until you're certain nothing mood-killing will happen on-screen in the near future. Let's be generous and say, oh, the next 20 minutes or so.

—JULIEANNE SMOLINSKI



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A GQ VIDEO ORIGINAL SERIES PREMIERE

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, TWENTY-EIGHT OF THE MOST TALENTED BARTENDERS IN NORTH AMERICA SQUARED OFF IN LAS VEGAS TO SEE WHO WAS THE UNITED STATES BARTENDERS' GUILD'S MOST IMAGINATIVE BARTENDER. GQ SELECTED FIVE OF THESE BARTENDERS, WHO WORK IN SOME OF THE COOLEST BARS, TO HOST US IN THEIR HOMETOWNS. WITH **RUDY CHANEY** AND **ELIE AYROUTH** FROM FOODBEAST ALONG FOR THE RIDE, WE HIT THE BEST BARS AND RESTAURANTS IN L.A., MINNEAPOLIS, SEATTLE, NEW ORLEANS, AND WASHINGTON D.C. THIS IS: **WHERE'S THE BAR.**



Gospel's Garden, Bar Naka, Seattle

1.75 parts BOMBAY SAPPHIRE® Gin
 .75 parts Ginger Syrup
 .75 parts Fresh Lemon Juice
 .25 parts Charcoal solution*
 .25 parts Egg whites
 3 drops Scrappy's Firewater Tincture

Place all ingredients into a Boston Shaker. Add ice until 3/4 full. Shake. Pour through basket strainer into a classic coupe glass. Enjoy!

*5 g activated charcoal to 250 ml water



PLACES

Where you drink is just as important as what you drink. One of our stops was the über-hip bar/restaurant **Spoon and Stable** in Minneapolis. A trip here is warm and inviting; like visiting your grandma's house, if your grandmother is a James Beard Award winner and runs a top-notch craft cocktail program.



DRINKS

We visited many bars and tried lots of drinks. One of the best was the "Gospel's Garden" from **Bar Naka** in Seattle. A variation on a Gin Sour, it's delicious, texturally intriguing, and balanced forward towards acid which compliments the Bombay Sapphire. Plus, it's black, which in cocktails is dope.



FOOD

At each venue, hosts Rudy and Elie received exclusive access to the kitchen for a look at how food is going hand in hand with cocktails. In Minneapolis, Chef Gavin Kaysen gave us a look at the menu, and lessons on how to prepare great food that will make your cocktail sing.



WATCH NOW: VIDEO.GQ.COM

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...and How to Trip Out in the Cold



TRAVEL

Get Your Head out of the Sand

• This is winter! Don't run away from it. Why, as soon as it gets chilly, do you have to sit at your desk, dreaming of the beach and checking airfares to the Dominican Republic and shit? How about filling your lungs with brisk wintry air instead? How about taking in some alpine vistas? Don't you want to lie naked on a bearskin rug with another naked person, toasting your flesh by a crackling fire of fine hardwood?

Stop running from winter and go where you can embrace the cold. Like Cortina, Italy, where you can ski the Dolomites with beautiful tan people and eat amazing pasta; Quebec City in Canada, the closest thing to a European ice fortress in North America; the Berkshires, where



you can Airbnb a house, try cross-country skiing, and then wander the underrated contemporary-art collection at Mass MoCA.

Or, better yet, join us at the **Hotel Jackson**, the new boutiquey lodging in Jackson Hole, America's coolest ski town. Because after a day of ripping through fluffy powder at one of the country's steepest resorts, we plan to warm ourselves (and the cute person we're bringing) on a fluffy bed in a Zen room sheathed in reclaimed

▲ This is Cortina D'Ampezzo, and it's as fun to ski as it is to say aloud.

barnwood. We will stare at awe-inspiring views of the mountains as we drink old-fashioned and feel damn wintry! Because wintry is exactly what we want to feel.

Besides, it's only January. By March we'll all *really* be running away from winter with the urgency of a man stalked by a heartless killer. Because by March we're going to realize winter mostly sucks.—DEVIN FRIEDMAN

LABELS WE LOVE

Snowboard Gear That Gets the Tokyo Drift

→ Snowboard style has often been—what's the word?—wack. Obnoxious colors, garish logos, pants so big they'd fit in at an early-'90s British rave. So we're, like, *totally* stoked to see snowboard company Burton release a capsule collection with hard-to-find Japanese streetwear label Neighborhood. The

collaboration is split between gear you'll wear on the slopes—note the slim checkered water-resistant pants that fit suspiciously like actual pants—and gear you'll save for the street, like that patched shearling-collar bomber and *Tron*-hatched sweater. Since we've solved snowboard style, let's move on to the next pressing issue: Why is

the ski lodge always so stingy with the tiny marshmallows in a cup of cocoa?
—SAM SCHUBE



Jacket, \$1,000, sweater, \$190, pants, \$350, cap, \$90, and snowboard, \$320, by Burton x Neighborhood, at Burton, 106 Spring St., N.Y.C.; burton.com.

But If You Really Can't Deal...



• ...go to **Nizuc**, in Cancún—but not the Cancún you're thinking. Nizuc is a 29-acre utopia across the water from all the Señor-Frogging, mandal-wearing Cancún tourists you know and loathe. It has 109 pools (seriously), six restaurants, and soft sand sloping into the Caribbean. And it's *maybe* four hours away from you.—JON WILDE



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Go
Places

PLAY NOW



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→ **EACH MONTH**, the editors of *GQ* will select a series of items from our pages available through our online retail partner, [Mr Porter.com](http://MrPorter.com)

→ **TO LEARN** more—and see what we have chosen for you this month—go to GQ.com/selects

Just a few of our picks from this issue...



Persol sunglasses
p. 43



J.Crew Ludlow suit jacket
p. 15



Gucci belt
p. 72



Neil Barrett shirt
p. 80

PROMOTION



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• To shoot this Mount Rushmore of literary-level country songwriters, we got Stapleton, Isbell, and Simpson to take a break from their respective tours and gather in a Seattle alley.



The New Indies

Indie rock may be dead, but the spirit has moved on to rebel uprisings in country, jazz, and hip-hop



The Country Insurgency

CHRIS STAPLETON, JASON ISBELL, AND STURGILL SIMPSON

If you feel like real country music died with the 1970s and gave way to a genre that's the musical equivalent of Walmart—monolithic, cheap, and eroding the soul of small-town America—we've got badass news for you. There's a new gang of outlaws on the make.

In 2013, when Jason Isbell was newly sober from years of rock 'n' roll excess as a member of the Drive-By Truckers, he self-released *Southeastern*. The album was easy on the ears but tough on the psyche, as he dragged whole battalions of skeletons out of his closet and cataloged

every rotting bone in rhyme. (Prepare for songs about rehab and cancer.) The production, by Dave Cobb, was as raw as the writing—and the songs connected in a way that Nashville's music-industrial complex never expected. Soon, Isbell's intensely personal lovers' anthem, "Cover Me Up," was winning him thunderous standing ovations at holy temples of American music, from the Beacon Theatre to the Ryman Auditorium. His 2015 follow-up, *Something*

More Than Free, hit No. 1 on the rock, country, and folk charts.

Turns out Isbell is not a one-man insurgency. In fact, it feels like there's a twangy riot going on. The second shot was the release of Sturgill Simpson's *Metamodern Sounds in Country Music*, also produced by Cobb. Simpson grew up in eastern Kentucky, the groggy-eyed son of an often absent undercover narcotics officer. Like Waylon Jennings, Simpson has a singing voice that's beautiful but hard-edged and country as hell, and he writes like a

psychedelic warrior-philosopher. *There's a gateway in our minds*, Simpson sings, *that leads somewhere out there, far beyond this plane*. "I want all that dirt and grime and life-sauce," Simpson says of his sound. "A lot of my favorite old soul records have it, but you don't hear it on country records anymore."

Yet if there's one guy who is accelerating the crossover of this new kind of old country, it's Chris Stapleton. The week before November's CMA

Awards, the long-haired Kentuckian with the Ronnie Van Zant voice sold about 3,000 copies of his debut solo album, *Traveller* (produced by, you guessed it, Dave Cobb). The week after the awards, he sold over 150,000 copies and shot to No. 1. What happened at the show is Stapleton and his buddy Justin Timberlake tore down the house with an odd-couple medley of drinking songs—and then Stapleton took home Album of the Year.

While it's hard to imagine mainstream country radio broadcasting Isbell's

chemo stories, or Simpson singing about reptile aliens, Stapleton—whose songs have been cut by Kenny Chesney, Tim McGraw, and Adele—could be the gateway guy who lures people away from impersonal beer-commercial country with a taste of the hard stuff. "This is the highest-level group of hillbillies you've ever put in GQ," Stapleton says with a laugh. "I'm sure of that."

—WILL WELCH

The High Priest of Sax

KAMASI
WASHINGTON

To be clear: We are not here to sell you some trumped-up stuff about jazz being back from the dead. Because it's mostly not! But we are announcing the arrival of a major new force in music, full stop. He plays cosmic spiritual jazz of the highest order. (Think John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*.) The kind of stuff that feels like a journey through outer space and the human interior at the same time—but always with a solid groove. His name is Kamasi Washington. He's from Los Angeles. And if you're in a Spotify rut, we urge you to check out his three-disc odyssey, *The Epic*. It's the kind of album that can shift your mood, or the energy of your whole house, the moment you press "play."

What first caught our attention about Washington was his Questlove-meets-Sun Ra look, which neatly represents the sound of his music. And it was his résumé that made us listen: Washington arranged strings and played sax on Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*. But we never could've anticipated just how deep in—and how far out—*The Epic* would take us. "If you're the first person to land on Mars," Washington says when asked about his sonic forebears, "your intention is to get there. Guys like Coltrane and [Pharoah] Sanders showed us the way. But for everybody who comes after, it becomes about what you can do once you're there. So I'm exploring."—W.W.



ALL PAGES, STYLIST: KELLY MCCABE AT ART DEPARTMENT; OPENING PAGES, PROP STYLIST: MINOU WHITE AT THE DROUIN AGENCY; GROOMING: KAUJA MISTRAL TOWNER FOR THE DROUIN AGENCY; THIS PAGE, SET DESIGN: ANDY HENBEST AT FRANK REPS; GROOMING: HEE SOO KWON FOR WALIN+GOETZ; FOR CLOTHES AND LOCATION, SEE ADDITIONAL CREDITS.

The Smartest Mouth in Hip-Hop

VINCE STAPLES

Vince Staples is a hip-hop oddball. After all, he came up with L.A.'s Odd Future, probably the oddball-est delinquents in rap. But even then, he defies categorization. He's from Snoop Dogg's Long Beach—but he's not a stoner. Nor is he sipping codeine like Future. He's also not the *street poet* type, like Kendrick Lamar. What he is, is the Joe Pesci of rap.*

By that we mean he's a scene-stealer. He'll do a song with the legendary Ghostface Killah, but you'll find yourself fast-forwarding to Vince's part. He got famous off the Odd Future association, but his debut album, *Summertime '06*, is better than anything they've put out. He's also hilarious—he once told me, completely seriously, that "Ray J fought for civil rights on the big screen." But just when you're ready to dismiss him as "a funny guy" (to quote *GoodFellas*), he'll undercut his humor with some uncomfortable truth. On "Señorita," from *Summertime*, he raps, *That's somebody's son / but a war to be won, baby / Either go hunt or be hunted.*

Staples might not be the guy who does a No. 1 song with Katy Perry, but we think he's going to have a longer career defying rap stereotypes and delivering clear-eyed lines about the world around him. "When an asteroid hits the earth, you don't really ask how it got there," Staples says, explaining his vision for his legacy. "It's just the impression that's everlasting."

—JAKE WOOLF

**For the record: He's also way taller than Joe Pesci, and about three decades more relevant.*



→ Straight Outta Hollywood

15 Albums That Deserve Their Own Movies

They've made movies out of board games, action figures, and obscure TV shows, so it was only a matter of time before Hollywood got around to

CLASSIC ALBUMS.

And *Straight Outta Compton* was so good, we started rifling through our record collection, scanning Spotify, and wondering which hall-of-fame records would make killer movies



*Pink Floyd:
The Movie,
starring
Driver and
Cera.*



GOOD TASTE. WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED?



EXPERIENCE
A CUP ABOVE

acupabove.com

NESPRESSO
What else?




WISH YOU WERE HERE Stephen Frears

THE ALBUM: English prog-rock gods Pink Floyd's 1975 follow-up to *The Dark Side of the Moon* and tribute to troubled original frontman Syd Barrett

THE PITCH: Academy-bait tearjerker, with acid flashbacks. Seven years after Barrett's deteriorating mental state forces Roger Waters (Adam Driver) and David Gilmour (Taylor Kitsch) to kick him out of the band, an almost unrecognizable Syd (a Method-fat Michael Cera) turns up during the *Wish You Were Here* sessions, stirring up memories of his decline and fall.

STRANGWAYS, HERE WE COME

 Gus Van Sant

THE ALBUM: The Smiths' last studio album, whose greatness might be the only thing that Morrissey and Johnny Marr agree on

THE PITCH: The cattiest section of Morrissey's recent memoir—the part about former Smiths drummer Mike Joyce, described by Moz as “a flea in search of a dog,” suing Morrissey and Marr over royalties. When Joyce's lawyers call him to the witness stand, Morrissey (Tom Hiddleston) must confront Marr (Daniel Radcliffe) and reckon with their fallout. It's a courtroom drama guaranteed to make Oscar go wild!

LEGEND


 Phil Lord and Chris Miller

THE ALBUM: The 15-times-platinum Bob Marley greatest-hits collection,

without which no dorm room is ever complete

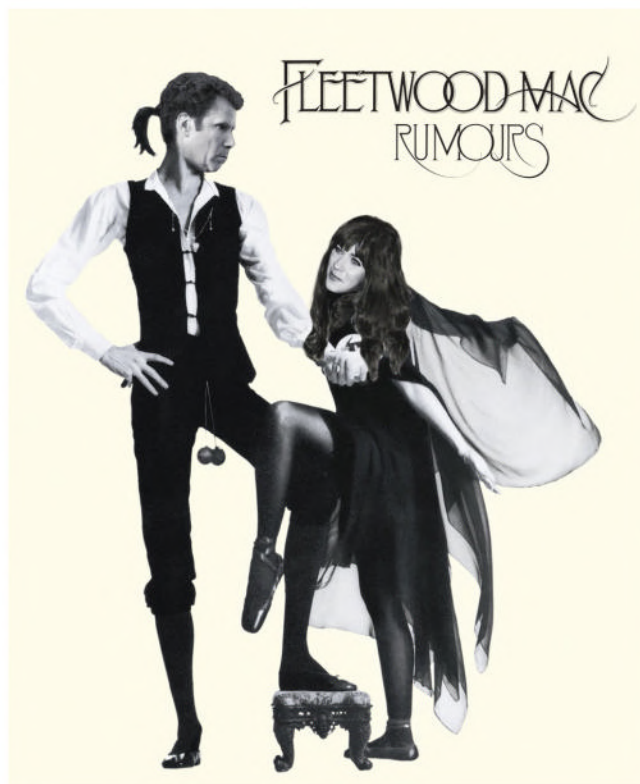
THE PITCH: It's *Hot Tub Time Machine* meets *The Harder They Come!* When stoners Jesse (Jaden Smith) and Sam (Asa Butterfield) attempt to turn a halogen lamp into a weed vaporizer, they accidentally invent time travel. Everything is jammin' until they stumble upon a 1976 CIA plot to assassinate Bob Marley (Lenny Kravitz).

MY BEAUTIFUL DARK TWISTED FANTASY


 Kanye West

THE ALBUM: The one after *808s & Heartbreak*

THE PITCH: In an intense Bergmanesque drama written and directed by Kanye West, a troubled genius goes into a tailspin after his mother dies and his drunken misbehavior at an awards show turns him into a meme. He sequesters himself in Hawaii with a



RUMOURS

 Paul Thomas Anderson


THE ALBUM:

Fleetwood Mac's 1970s rock landmark

THE PITCH: A huge rock band enters the studio to begin work on a new album—only nobody's on speaking terms. Christine McVie (Elizabeth Banks) and her husband, John (Bret McKenzie), have just split up; Lindsey Buckingham (Jason Segel) and Stevie Nicks (Zooey Deschanel) are about to. Can Mick Fleetwood (Will Ferrell) hold the band together long enough to finish 11 tracks? Will a superabundance of high-quality cocaine help? (Spoiler alert: Yes, no.)

handpicked team of collaborators—but can he conquer grief, self-doubt, and *South Park* parodies to make his masterpiece? Through the magic of CGI, Kanye West plays everyone—Rick Ross, Bon Iver, Nicki Minaj, Amber Rose, the topless swan lady from the “Runaway” short film, and Taylor Swift—except for Kanye West, who's played by Leonardo DiCaprio.

ATLIENS

 Don Bluth

THE ALBUM:

OutKast's legendary second LP, on which their groove deepens in every respect and southwest Atlanta turns sci-fi

THE PITCH: A retro-'80s animated adventure in which André 3000 and Big Boi (voicing themselves) develop telekinetic powers after

their '76 Eldorado is rewired by time travelers from the year 3000. Rising Atlanta rapper Young Thug cameos as the voice of a scarab beetle.

1989

 Joseph Kahn

THE ALBUM: Taylor Swift's post-country pop juggernaut. Perhaps you've heard of it.

THE PITCH: It's *The Umbrellas of*

Cherbourg meets TV's *Nashville!* In this jukebox musical, spunky singer-songwriter Taylor (Léa Seydoux) leaves Nashville for New York City, falls hard for a boy-band pinup (Robert Pattinson), and makes a frenemy of Katy Perry (Lizzy Caplan). To keep the good-girl faith in pop's fast lane, she'll need all the help she can get.



LIVE THROUGH THIS

 Jared Leto

THE ALBUM: Hole frontwoman Courtney Love goes pop on her own terms, with an album of catchy, scabrous songs so undeniable even the death of Kurt Cobain the same week couldn't overshadow it

THE PITCH: Jared Leto stars as Courtney Love in a bizarre unauthorized biopic written and directed by Jared Leto. Questioned about the project during a Thirty Seconds to Mars press conference in Shanghai, Leto admits, “I’m not sure why I did this—even by my standards, it was a terrible idea, and I’m ashamed that I did it.” Leto subsequently becomes the first director ever to take his name off a movie he wrote, directed, and starred in.

EXILE ON MAIN ST

🎬 Martin Scorsese

THE ALBUM:

Hounded by personal demons and British tax collectors, the Rolling Stones hide out in the South of France and emerge with an album as torn-and-frayed as they feel

THE PITCH:

Upstairs, the Villa Nellcôte is a never-ending cocktail hour where Mick (Ben Whishaw) mingles with artists and criminals alike; down in the basement, Keith (Andrew Garfield) is making some of the greatest music of his life while sliding into heroin addiction with Anita Pallenberg (Elle Fanning). It's the best of times, it's the worst of times—and that's before the French police show up.

STREET SURVIVORS

🎬 David Gordon Green

THE ALBUM:

Lynyrd Skynyrd album recorded before a 1977 plane crash killed lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steve Gaines, and backup singer Cassie Gaines

THE PITCH: It's *Almost Famous* meets *The Buddy Holly Story*.

When a legendary southern rock band led by Van Zant (Charlie Hunnam) finds itself in need of a third guitarist, Cassie (Jennifer

Lawrence) recommends her brother Steve (Nicholas Hoult). But a charter flight from Greenville to Baton Rouge is about to turn Steve's unlikely success story into a tragedy.

MAGGOT BRAIN

🎬 F. Gary Gray

THE ALBUM:

Before Funkadelic begat P-Funk, they made this 1971 psychedelic masterpiece
THE PITCH: It's the story of a funk legend and his friendship with the greatest guitarist you've probably never heard of. Everything changes for New Jersey teenager Eddie Hazel (rapper Future, in his movie debut) when George Clinton (Kevin Hart) taps him as a backup guitarist for his soul band, the Parliaments. Soon the backup band discovers Marshall stacks and morphs into Funkadelic, the first black acid-rock group—and Hazel begins spiraling toward his doom.

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

🎬 David O. Russell

THE ALBUM: 'NSync's 2000 sophomore album—c'mon, it's basically their *Rubber Soul*

THE PITCH: Paul Giamatti (see next page!) brings his Unscrupulous Rock Svengali Figures trilogy to a close with a magnetic



CHINESE DEMOCRACY

🎬 Kathryn Bigelow

THE ALBUM: The most infamous rock album ever delayed

THE PITCH: It had to be an instant classic—even if it took ten years. In this high-concept feminist re-imagining, Axl Rose (Kristen Stewart, going full *Raging Bull* in cornrows and a fat suit) gets lost

in his own jungle while struggling to complete Guns N' Roses' *Use Your Illusion* follow-up. The all-star cast includes Slash (Zoë Kravitz), Elton John (Eric Stonestreet), Buckethead (Jeff Goldblum), and a sympathetic dolphin that speaks to Axl in dreams (Dame Judi Dench).



TAKE CARE

🎬 Steven Soderbergh

THE ALBUM: Drake's navel-gazing, hater-silencing 2011 mega-hit

THE PITCH: Remember *Locke*, the Tom Hardy movie where it's just him driving for 85 minutes, trying to hold together his exploding marriage and career with nothing but a cell phone? This is like that,

except it's two hours of Drake (Jussie Smollett) "running through the 6" (filmmaker-friendly Toronto, that is!) in a Bentley Mulsanne while listening to upset voice mails from all the girls he's loved. Self-indulgent and improbably compelling, just like most of Drake's stuff.

performance as Lou Pearlman, the former blimp salesman whose Orlando boy-band factory gave the world 'NSync, the Backstreet Boys, and a slew of other *TRL*-era pop replicants—almost all of whom later sued Pearlman for fraud.

TROUT MASK REPLICA

🎬 David Lynch

THE ALBUM: Captain Beefheart's 1969 experimental landmark, recorded in a single six-hour session—after frontman Don Van Vliet worked the band to the point of mental

collapse with eight months of cultlike marathon rehearsals.
THE PITCH: The most difficult album ever made is now the most unfathomable movie of the decade! Lifelong *Trout Mask* fan David Lynch re-imagines the punishing rehearsals as a

psychic duel between Van Vliet (Benicio Del Toro) and bandmates Zoot Horn Rollo (Ryan Gosling) and John "Drumbo" French (Kit Harington). Adrien Brody plays a character based on Frank Zappa who speaks only in seal-bark noises. 🐙



His mere presence improves everything he's in by at least 50 percent. It's been true for two decades, but he's really on a roll right now: the N.W.A biopic, the Brian Wilson biopic, his juicy new Wall Street series on Showtime. You know what else would improve by 50 percent if someone wised up and invited him this year? The Oscars

— ZACH BARON



We Nominate

Paul Giamatti

for Everything

PROP STYLIST: JONATHAN RITZMAN AT BEDNARK STUDIO. GROOMING: AMY KOMOROWSKI FOR AXE. THIS PAGE, SHIRT: STEVEN ALAN. OPPOSITE PAGE, JACKET: TOMAS MAIER. T-SHIRT: CALVIN KLEIN UNDERWEAR. JEANS: J BRAND. WATCH: BOCA MMXII.



PAUL GIAMATTI EMERGES from the fog near the waterfront in Brooklyn Heights, as local legend says he often does. Faded black polo, faded black demeanor—he has the wary, unsmiling affect every other person who lives in this city has. We walk to a diner. He's consented to this conversation because he has a show to promote, Showtime's swaggering *Billions*, in which he plays a crusading Spitzer-like New York district attorney with a bondage-influenced sex life, and more generally because he's having one of those years. *Straight Outta Compton*, *Love & Mercy*, a cameo on the Amy Schumer show—each time Giamatti appeared on-screen in 2015, it was like a jolt of weird joy, a signal that whatever you were watching was worth watching. Which is pretty much what he's been doing since *Private Parts*, or *American Splendor*, or *Sideways*, or *Win Win*, or whichever of the many essential parts he's played that you count as his essential-est. At the diner, he gazes off into the middle distance mostly, laughing occasionally—one staccato *ha!* But you've got to earn the laugh.

GQ: The temptation with these interviews is to talk to the actor like he's some mystic artist plumbing the unknown. But I get a distinct nine-to-five vibe from you.

Paul Giamatti: I started out doing bit parts in TV things. So I learned a somewhat practical attitude about it. You're playing the third cop—you just have to go in and get it done. They don't give a shit. So if I'm gonna be mystical, it has to happen fast.

You've played a villain in *12 Years a Slave* and a villain in *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*; do you make a distinction between more prestige-oriented projects and blockbusters?

No, I see them all as the same thing. The *Spider-Man* thing was not easy, actually. It was actually harder than *12 Years a Slave*, because it was all very technical, and there wasn't much of a part there. But I've done little indie movies that felt like big-budget things, you know, in that they felt really impersonal, like, "What the hell are we doing here?" And I've done big-budget things that felt like little indie movies. I mean, I did this *Planet of the Apes* movie, and it was fantastic, doing it with Tim Burton. I don't know if it's a good movie or not, but we got to do all this weird work on monkeys and monkey movement. And that was actually very weirdly mystical.

In *Billions*, we first see your character in his underwear, tied up. Were you unsure if you wanted to feign sexual satisfaction at being burned with a cigarette?

I don't care about being tied up. That's what I'm supposed to do. But the only thing that ever makes me concerned is that it comes across as believable. Because they were writing it not to be goofy or stupid; they were writing it to be a part of the character. You do much more harrowing, embarrassing stuff as an actor than sex stuff. Seriously! I have to watch my kid get

killed or something. That's much harder than lying on the floor tied up. It's not a documentary about my sex life.

Directors seem to like to put you in extreme situations. Does it bother you to be perceived as kind of a dark guy?

It's funny, most people who recognize me on the subway and stuff—it's much more they think of me as a funny guy. I get much more of people telling me how much I make them laugh, actually. Which is nice. I don't feel like actually my persona is one of a psycho. People aren't trying to challenge me to a fight, you know what I mean?

This year you played two different evil music managers, in [the Brian Wilson biopic] *Love & Mercy* and [the N.W.A biopic] *Straight Outta Compton*—how did that happen?

• The noted actor, shown here with the star of a whimsical French children's film.



That was a fluke. *Love & Mercy* was done way before the other one. The one guy actually was a shrink. So I never really thought of them as the same thing.

Were you an N.W.A fan growing up?

I mean, that stuff came out when I was in college. And white college kids were totally into that.

You went to Yale—N.W.A was big there?

Oh yeah! White middle-class college kids were totally into N.W.A.

Your other big moment last year was as a juror in Amy Schumer's *12 Angry Men* parody, in which you get maybe the best line—"Her ass makes me furious!" Something like that. Something about her ass. She's brutal on herself. It's very funny.

You got nominated for an Emmy for that. I did. Which seemed kind of silly to me.

Why?

Well, there were twelve people in that room, and they were all funny. And it seemed kind of arbitrary to me that they picked me.

I was talking to someone who was positive you'd won an Oscar for *Sideways*.

Yeah, people say that all the time. I didn't. I wasn't even nominated.

What do you make of that?

I make of that that there's so much noise in the atmosphere that people can't remember one thing from the next. I make of that that there's so much data flowing in everybody's head from the Internet that they can't keep anything straight anymore.

I'm sure you saw that Jerry Heller, the manager you played in *Straight Outta Compton*, is now suing the production?

I did! I mean, it doesn't surprise me.

I guess he'd been saying he was gonna do it the whole way. I didn't think he comes off looking that bad, actually. What's-his-name looks much worse. Suge Knight. He should sue. He probably will, too.

Heller also made a point of saying he'd never had a lobster brunch in his life.

Somehow that scene, between you and Eazy-E's character, really upset him.

But the really funny thing is, I don't remember eating lobster in the movie. Somebody says in the movie, "You guys are sitting around eating lobster." But I can't eat lobster! I'm allergic to shellfish. That's very funny. "I've never had lobster!" I kind of hope I get called in to testify on this. ✕

ZACH BARON is GQ's staff writer.



Mrs. Mr. November

You know 25-year-old supermodel HANNAH DAVIS for her *S.I.* swimsuit cover, co-starring in those DirecTV ads with the talking horse, and easing fiancé Derek Jeter into post-Yankees life. Come take a tour of Davis's island home and you'll make quick sense of why we haven't heard rumblings of a baseball comeback from "Numbuh 2"



LET'S STOP THE TOUR for a sec. Take a look out the right side of your beach Wrangler. That house up there? That big ol' spread overlooking prime Caribbean St. Thomas waterfront? That's the quaint future In-Law Compound of Derek Jeter. His 25-year-old fiancée, Hannah Davis, comes home to this open-air porch-and-bedecked West Indies plantation house. And *hoo-eeee*, is it some real honeymoon shit.

There're vistas and palms, a bunch of Italian mastiffs draped over the porch furniture. The grills go all day and all night, and the wine starts flowing on the festively early side. The music is reggae, dancehall, soca.

"It feels like a Fourth of July barbecue every day there," the green-eyed swimsuit model says with a sigh, in that you never know who's gonna flop down for dinner—maybe even 41-year-old Jeter. "It's that laid-back

mentality I miss most, people there just not quite moving as fast as the rest of the world."

So what're we serving at this barbecue? Elder brother Conn, a rippling six-foot-five-inch beneficiary of the Davis Genetic Legacy, is a renowned spearfisher(!), so most likely something coal-fired that he casually javelined through the gut, then pulled ashore through blood clouds. Hope your manhood's not easily diminished. Entertainment? Dad, a world-traveling scuba diver with a shiny new GoPro, does frequent *Nat Geo*-y showings of his last dunk. And if you wanna hit some balls around, Hannah was a ranked junior tennis player for much of her youth.

"Started modeling to buy tennis rackets," she says. "And it *kiiinda* grew from there." (True-ish statement! For her pitch-ladyship with DirecTV, in which she hangs with a talking horse on some azure coastline, she made, like, 8,427 tennis rackets. And the

gazillion-carat meteor on her left hand is said—by at least *one* person!—to have set Jeter back about 1,342 Louisville Sluggers.)

As for the Captain, with a retirement package like this, we don't know why he's bothering with his media-mogul phase, puttering around the offices of The Players' Tribune—his athlete-friendly publishing site—when the two could spend more time down here instead. (Seriously, Google Image a fish spear.) But if he's away? Suits a fiercely independent Davis just fine.

"That girl in high school that spent every waking moment with the boyfriend and lost all her girlfriends?! That's not what life's about," she says, laughing kinda mercilessly at the thought. "You have family and friends for a *reason*! You can't leave that in the dust. And your partner should agree with that and want the same things for himself."

If he does, he's out of his mind.—SARAH BALL





O S C A R

S E A S O N

Not that long ago, in a filmmaking galaxy not all that far away, **Oscar Isaac** built an eminently credible career playing soulful, brooding, complicated men in smallish critically acclaimed films.

It was fun while it lasted. America, behold the **next great Jedi* of Hollywood**

 BRETT MARTIN

 NATHANIEL GOLDBERG



***FANBOYS:**
We can't actually say whether he's a Jedi or not



ONE OTHERWISE ORDINARY day in southern Spain, where I went to meet Oscar Isaac, I was woken by the sound of a marching band in the street outside my hotel room. Going to the balcony, I found, for no apparent reason, a procession of Stormtroopers, Jawas, and other assorted baddies, brought up in the rear by Darth Vader, like Santa in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Several hundred people were watching while the band played "The Imperial March." I had assumed it was traditional folk music. And, of course, in a very real sense it was.

I did not know if the sound carried to wherever Oscar Isaac was at that moment. If it did, I wondered if some part of him shivered. To become part of *Star Wars* is less like joining a cast and more like joining a priesthood. It made perfect sense that the final trailer for the newest episode, *The Force Awakens*, aired at halftime of a *Monday Night Football* game, the NFL being another multi-billion-dollar corporate enterprise that has turned the neat trick of getting itself treated as a sacred public institution. (Not to mention the shared fetish for Roman numerals.) Isaac, meanwhile, has made his growing name in a series of brilliant but darkly idiosyncratic roles: the brooding businessman so vain about his integrity that it becomes its own kind of corruption in *A Most Violent Year*, or the wounded, wandering folk singer of the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*. Even his sci-fi debut, as the cerebral sex-robot-building Frankenstein of *Ex Machina*, was high on discussions of the nature of consciousness, low on explosions.

Moreover, he has shown himself to be a lifelong non-joiner and an actor so private about his private life that the mere use of the word *girlfriend* leads him to try to take it back the next day. And now Oscar Isaac is about to join the biggest, most scrutinized club in the world.

To which the actor responds in pretty much the only way he can: with a shrug. "Obviously I think a lot of people are going to see *Star Wars*," he says. "I imagine I might get recognized more. But right now it's still sort of an abstract idea. And, to be honest, that's something people tell you for a long time. Like, every other movie: 'Here it comes! Here it comes! You better be ready!'"



IT IS NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO BE too late to eat dinner in Spain, but Isaac is pushing it. His plane was delayed three hours in Malta, and now it's approaching midnight as we hurriedly cross the Plaza de Gracia in Granada. The tables set up beneath lights strung from the trees are still filled with boisterous families sipping sherry, finishing dessert, and otherwise enjoying a cool Saturday night in October, but kitchens are beginning to close, and we get a subdued eye roll as we squeeze into two seats at the counter of a brightly lit seafood-tapas joint. Nevertheless, glasses of manzanilla soon appear, followed by a parade of lustrous pink shrimp, ruby-red-tipped clams, and deep-fried sardines. This last presents a challenge.

"Do you really eat the head?" Isaac asks. I do, I tell him. With the slightest hesitation, he follows suit, chews, and swallows.

"Now, that's good head," he says. We look at each other. I close my notebook. "Well," he says. "There's your story."

Isaac orders a bottle of Rioja in fluent Spanish. Born in Guatemala to a Cuban father and a Guatemalan mother, he grew up in Miami. With his heavy-lidded eyes, angular features, black fedora, and hair and eyes so dark they could be inkblots in a pictogram, he looks about as natural and old-world in this setting as a figure on an old vermouth poster.

The 36-year-old actor has been in Spain and Malta for almost three months, shooting *The Promise*, a love story set against the backdrop of the Armenian genocide and collapse of the Ottoman Empire. ("A big hootenanny," he says drily.) Before that, it was Montreal for three months, working on *X-Men: Apocalypse*, in which, entombed in so much prosthetic

gear he required a built-in cooling unit, he plays the eponymous Apocalypse. (That's a bad guy, in case the subtlety of the name fooled you.) He won't set foot in the United States until Christmas; won't see his apartment and dog, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, until February. Nobody would confuse it with coal mining, exactly, but it is a peripatetic, almost entirely work-focused life, and he is feeling it. "I do miss home," he says. "And it's not like there's an endless well to draw on. Inspiration has to come from somewhere—observing things, reading things, thinking about things. I get a bit nervous I'm not doing that." Small comforts help: bringing plants into hotel rooms, the guitar he keeps close at hand. And he's also aware of Hollywood's mercurial attention span: "These things go up and down. There's a sense of 'Strike while the iron is hot.'"

In person, Isaac has a wide, easy smile that serves as a reminder of how elusive it's been on-screen. It's been a long time since we've had a leading man whose charisma comes packed with such tetchiness, so little naked desire to be liked. Isaac's most memorable characters have all projected varying degrees of menace and loneliness. A Juilliard grad, he is scholarly and passionate about acting, deeply romantic about its artistic possibilities. Inevitably you think of De Niro, Pacino, Hoffman, Hackman. Call it, apropos of nothing in particular, the pre-*Star Wars* generation.

It was precisely that quality, though, that led *Star Wars* director J. J. Abrams to summon Isaac to a meeting in Paris in March 2014. A fan of *Llewyn Davis*, Abrams was convinced that Isaac was the actor needed to play the role of the roguish fighter pilot Poe Dameron, a character the director describes as "wonderful, daring, sardonic, brave, (text continued on page 93)

TO BECOME
PART OF
'STAR WARS'
IS LESS LIKE
JOINING
A CAST AND
MORE LIKE
JOINING A
PRIESTHOOD.



« «

suit (opening page) \$1,095
John Varvatos Star USA

cardigan \$40
Uniqlo

denim shirt \$695
Dsquared2

t-shirt \$46
Alternative

pocket square
The Hill-Side

«

suit \$575
Tommy Hilfiger

vest \$1,445
Brunello Cucinelli

shirt \$195
J.Lindeberg

tie \$145
Eleventy

shoes \$385
Allen Edmonds

socks
Pantherella

pocket square
Earnest Sewn

bag
Louis
Vuitton





ABOUT THESE
CLOTHES
**WARMING
UP THIS
SPRING'S
BEST SUITS**

• We're about to tell you something counter-intuitive, so stick with us: It's time to buy a lightweight spring suit. That's right. Buy it now in the depths of winter, when the store's still got your size, and don't throw it in the back of your closet. Start wearing it as soon as you cut the tags off, and warm it up by piling on layers underneath. Follow Oscar's lead here—you can do a white tee with a stretched-out collar, a thin wool cardigan, a not-too-puffy down vest, or a natty crewneck sweater. The idea is to assemble a flexible, convertible, and stylishly disheveled—as in, don't worry if your shirt isn't ironed—look that adds up to all the warmth and weight you'll need to get you through until spring. The best part? Spring—glorious spring, with lunches al fresco and girls in cute sundresses—is going to arrive...eventually. And when it does, you'll be ready.—SAM SCHUBE



«
suit \$4,475
Brunello Cucinelli

sweater \$1,646
shirt \$570
and pocket square
Brunello Cucinelli

shoes \$385
Allen Edmonds

socks
J.Crew

sunglasses
Persol

«
suit \$1,195
Polo Ralph Lauren

cardigan \$185
shirt \$99
Polo Ralph Lauren

tie \$145
Eleventy

tie bar and pocket square
The Tie Bar

watch
Longines

bar
Candela, Granada, Spain

→ The **shirt-and-tie combos** we're feeling as we gear up for spring all have two things in common: gotta-touch-'em textures and can't-screw-'em-up colors



DAVID RINELLA

Because Your Business Suits Need a Lift
If you hear the phrase "earth tones" and start to snore, it's time to wake up—because they're fresher than your typical business whites. Just match one of these dusty-colored shirts to any textured tie and you're set for every day of the week. (Friday and Saturday nights included.)



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Ermenegildo Zegna
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DIBI

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Hespel
tie \$140
Salvatore Piccolo

shirt \$195
J.J. Lindeberg
tie \$19
The Tie Bar

shirt \$220
Glanshirt
tie \$145
Eleventy

shirt \$125
Todd Snyder
tie \$85
Glendon Lambert

shirt \$228
John Varvatos
tie \$75
J.Crew

shirt \$165
Polo Ralph Lauren
tie \$190
Burberry

shirt \$35
H&M
tie \$30
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GET SOME SCRATCH

←
Tacos,
Gracias Madre

→
Dodgers-lovin'
bartender dude,
Commissary





L.A. IS KING!

**WELCOME TO THE MOST EXCITING
FOOD CITY IN AMERICA**

IF YOU TOLD US ten years ago that L.A. would one day boast the country's most exciting food scene, we'd have said, "*Suuuure*. And Jared Leto will win an Oscar." But L.A.'s restaurants, once as predictable as the traffic, are now run by risk-loving chefs mixing a billion ethnicities with SoCal chill to create ambitious food. Even L.A.'s sprawl is a blessing as chefs explore new hoods with fresh ideas. Where to start? That's where our outsider's guide to L.A.'s restaurant revolution—and a good Uber driver—come in.



↑ Veal tongue, Animal



↑ Commissary



↑ Pulled-porchetta sandwich, Ledlow

First, Bow to the Three Kings of L.A.'s Food Scene

Four men, three burgeoning empires, 15 restaurants, and roughly 700 lick-the-plate-clean dishes

THE ANIMAL GUYS

Jon Shook & Vinny Dotolo

NEIGHBORHOOD Hollywood

RESTAURANTS **Animal** (meat-fest), **Son of a Gun** (raw fish), **Jon & Vinny's** (pizzeria), and three spots—**Trois Mec**, **Petit Trois**, **Trois Familia**—with chef Ludo Lefebvre

HOW THEY CHANGED THE SCENE

Somehow brought punk-rock takes to everything from ceviche to omelets.

MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE DISH Son of a Gun's fried-chicken sandwich. (You'll see.)

THAT'S SO L.A. "It sounds weird, but we hold meetings in our cars. Our restaurants are all shoeboxes, so it's either the car or the men's room, and it's weird in the men's room," says Shook.

FOOD-TRUCK HERO

Roy Choi

NEIGHBORHOOD Everywhere. "My trucks go from Irvine to Granada Hills to Signal Hill."

RESTAURANTS **Kogi trucks** (game-changing Korean tacos), **Chego** (sorta-Korean rice bowls), **A-Frame** (stoner Hawaiian), **Pot** and **Commissary** (high-concept Korean and avocado toast, respectively, in a chic hotel)

HOW HE CHANGED THE SCENE Rebooted taco trucks, then leapt from meals-on-wheels to brick-and-mortar at a lightning pace.

MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE DISH The half-Korean, half-Mexican taco

THAT'S SO L.A. "Becoming friends with Dilated Peoples, musicians I looked up to who enjoy what is, I guess, my art."

MR. DOWNTOWN

Josef Centeno

NEIGHBORHOOD Skid Row—adjacent downtown L.A.

RESTAURANTS **Bäco Mercat** ("sandwiches" from the future), **Bar Amá** (binge-worthy Tex-Mex), **Orsa & Winston** (somehow-it-works Japanese-Italian fusion), **Ledlow** (cheffed-up comfort food)

HOW HE CHANGED THE SCENE Helped take downtown L.A. from dingy to the city's hippest square mile.

MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE DISH Bäco Mercat's Bäco: a flatbread sorta-sandwich filled with three continents of deliciousness

THAT'S SO L.A. "People have asked me for ice in their wine."—SAM SCHUBE

Eat the Food, Steal the Design

• Dine at **République** and you'll come away with two things: an exploding gut from the ramped-up French-style cooking, and design inspiration worth cribbing for renovating your own crib. Like these four...



The Secret to Success

Bill Chait, mastermind behind Bestia and République, on L.A.'s culinary blastoff

“L.A. doesn’t just have new restaurants—it has aggressive restaurants. The ’80s and ’90s were about spectacles. Spago was a place to be seen. It wasn’t Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo at Animal doing groundbreaking, aggressive stuff.”

L.A. ♥s BREAKFAST

• Wake up to 200-plus days of sunshine a year and you’d be a morning person, too—which explains this city’s dedication to first-meal greatness. Santa Monica’s **M Street Kitchen** whips up sourdough-English-muffin sandwiches that make McMuffins look like, well, McMuffins. **The Sycamore Kitchen** doles out heavenly pastries and a Jerusalem Bowl with lentils, wheat berries, and za’atar chicken. And **Cofax** reinvents the breakfast burrito with simplicity: eggs, cheese, and smoked potatoes, either with chorizo or without (though, duh, with).—KHUONG PHAN



↑ Brown Butter Date Mini-Bundts, The Sycamore Kitchen

Today’s Special

We Don’t Need No Tasting Menus

• The tasting-menu pandemic has gripped this nation for years now as chefs subject patrons to their every tweezered, no-substitutions, wine-pairing-*strongly*-suggested diktats—a dining evolution that insinuates ordering à la carte is the equivalent of flying steerage. Yet Angelenos, who hardly object to pampering, have clung steadfastly to their food freedom. While plenty of tasting-menu joints around town are worth your time (chef Curtis Stone’s single-ingredient **Maude**, seafood-centric **Providence**), they’re the exception. So you can still order an app for your main or just get a ton of small plates, which scientifically barely count as calories.—PATRIC KUH



LESSON 1

Uncover the History

Some guy named Charlie Chaplin built the cathedral-style space in 1928. When chef Walter Manzke came in, he stripped off the '80s-era plaster to showcase the brick walls' rough-hewn vibe.

LESSON 3

Step Lively

Speaking of those tiles... In a space where your eye finds something cool in every corner, those trippy geometric ones in République's front hall are proof that flooring with attitude can make a room come alive.

LESSON 2

Take a Design Vacation

Manzke and wife/co-founder Margarita shipped in 5,000 tiles and 12,000 board feet of yakal wood from the Philippines because it was cheaper than shopping for it here in the States.

LESSON 4

Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

Yes, the walls are white and bright, but those deep blue—let's call 'em cobalt—wine and meat storage units up front somehow manage to stand out without shouting too loudly.

↑ République



↑ Old-fashioned (left), daiquiri; The Normandie Club



↑ Faith & Flower

The L.A. Designated Driver Just Went Extinct

(Thanks, Uber!)

• There's a scene in 1996's *Swingers* where Vince Vaughn and his posse barhop across Hollywood, each guy driving his own car between stops, circling for a space, then locking the steering wheel with one of those forked metal bars. Driving has always been as ingrained in L.A. culture as juicing and vapidty, but these days every restaurant curb is lined with Uber and Lyft cars, not valeted rides. DUIs have dropped, parking's no longer a problem, and getting across town isn't a hassle—it's a convenient excuse for

checking your Instagram feed. And now that everyone can booze later (and harder), the city's drinking scene has exploded—not by mimicking the brooding cocktail dens of New York and Chicago, but by embracing L.A.'s own freewheeling, uninhibited spirit. Welcome to a place where the bartender spikes your gin and tonic with fennel flowers from her own backyard, and a giant copper pineapple is a socially acceptable drinking vessel. Start with these four places, and don't forget to five-star your Uber driver.—GARRETT SNYDER

Drink

Secretly

THE WALKER INN

A hidden door at *The Normandie Club* (itself a great cocktail house) lets you into this reservation-only bar that serves a modernist cocktail omakase (dry ice is used). It's the most over-the-top buzz you'll ever have.

Drink

Some History

THE CHESTNUT CLUB

In a relatively unassuming (but lounge-until-last-call comfortable) banquette-filled bar sits a 400-ish-bottle collection of boozes, bartenders ready to use 'em all, and shelves adorned with vintage spirits you can buy.

Drink Like a

Eiki God

GOOD TIMES AT DAVEY WAYNE'S

Welcome to a hazy, '70s-themed hangout that doesn't apologize for the full-bore kitsch on the walls (for sale, if you're interested). Enjoy the Astroturf patio and roller-skating disco dancers.

Drink

Fancily

FAITH & FLOWER

Not to tell you your business, but your first drink at this new-wave brasserie has to be the English Milk Punch, a velvety rum-based mixture that takes three days to make (but only a minute to pour, thank God).

The L.A.

Kit List

So many great dishes, so few meals to eat. Start with these five



Omelet

@ PETIT TROIS

At his elbow-to-elbow brasserie, chef Ludo Lefebvre makes fresh eggs, French butter, and Boursin—herb-flavored cream cheese your grandma might have—into something glorious enough to make Jacques Pépin weep.



Pork Shank

@ BIRCH

Palm-sugar-rubbed pork roasted until it collapses, fermented red cabbage, smoked-paprika yogurt, and za'atar-dusted flatbread make for a U.N. resolution on a platter. →

THE VALLEY

CULVER CITY

Lukshon

In a sleek room, you get refined—sometimes twisted—Asian, like the spicy-chicken pops. Don't overthink, just order 'em.

VENICE

The Tasting Kitchen

Italian-ish plates and some of the city's best cocktails on Abbot Kinney, the coolest street in town.

HOLLYWOOD!

PASADENA

Union

In a land of chains, Union is a locally sourced, housemade safe haven of Cal-Italian deliciousness.

SILVER LAKE

Night + Market Song

Technicolor Thai: The room's orange, the food's spicy, and the tallboys are ice-cold.

DOWNTOWN

Bestia

It isn't easy to nab a seat—blame the rustic Italian food, can't-go-wrong wine list, and stay-all-night space.

MANHATTAN BEACH

Fishing with Dynamite

L.A.'s other beach hood has the city's most perfected (and unexpected) seafood.

ORANGE COUNTY



MEET L.A.'s FOOD SHERPA

Writer **Jonathan Gold** is to this city's food scene what Tenzing Norgay was to Everest

• L.A.'s big food moment is happening now, but the best thing about the city's scene has been there for a while. Jonathan Gold is a professional eater, with a career path—from Everyman's alterna-eater at *L.A. Weekly* (where he won a Pulitzer) to cult personality with a national-scale megaphone at the *L.A. Times*—that perfectly parallels the city's arc from Wolfgang Puck's '80s to Roy Choi's '10s. As much as any chef or restaurateur, Gold helped usher L.A. through its myopia and into its current vitality.

The way Gold eats is systematic. Though he now enthusiastically covers the hyped openings and hot spots, he's long been dedicated to the invisible strips, poorly lit blocks, and hidden counters of L.A.—the sort that define Koreatown, where I met him. He's been known to drive in from Pasadena in his blue pickup with 250,000 miles, trying up to six or seven places in one night. The first place we visit, a spin-off of a popular chain in Seoul, isn't worth a review. "I try really hard not to write about a place until it has legs, and sometimes it never does, so it never gets better," says Gold. For him, there's no discovery without risk of failure.

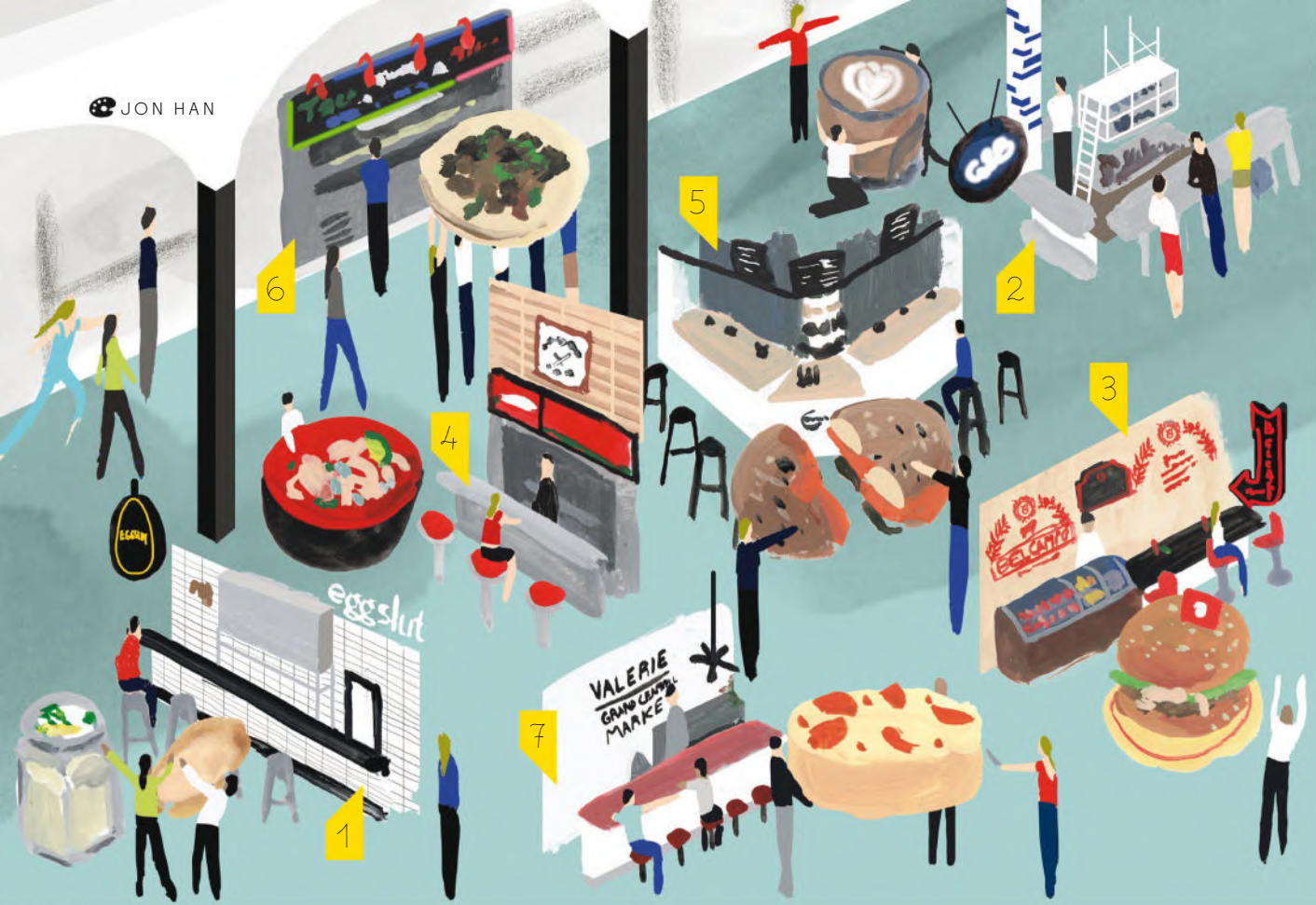
Today, "Jonathan Gold's 101 Best Restaurants" is loved by locals as an indispensable map to their endlessly illusive home. His precise-yet-sideways evocations of flavor and his jabs at L.A.'s Hollywood idolatry make his reviews entertaining, but it's his openhearted pursuit of discovery that lassos the city and pulls the drawstring a little tighter.—DANIEL RILEY

For Once, Hollywood Isn't the Star

Used to be the center of L.A.'s food world was the center of the film world. But great chefs have left for new neighborhoods, and it's about time you did, too



Fishing with Dynamite



Welcome to the Food Court of Your Dreams

Consider this your CliffsNotes to L.A.'s Grand Central Market and its 30,000 square feet of God-I-want-that-too food stalls

Grand Central Market is not new. It's old. Grandpa old. Maybe great-grandpa old. Ninety-nine years old. It has always been filled with stalls selling amazing food, but now some of the city's best chefs are opening booths instead of restaurants. Like Alvin Cailan of **EGGSLUT** (1). People wait upwards of an hour for his egg creations, which are as decadent as the name is awkward to say in mixed company. Take yours to **G&B** (2), one of the best coffee shops

in town and a sneaky Grand Central Market hack: When seats elsewhere are scarce, order a cup and perch on one of G&B's stools.

If you stop by GCM for lunch—prime stall-eating time—here's how to avoid the tyranny of choice. Visit **BELCAMPO** (3) if you don't plan to do anything strenuous for a solid two hours. Part high-end butcher shop, part lunch counter, part revolutionary meat company (they raise, slaughter, and

sell everything themselves), it also serves one of America's truly great burgers, with fries cooked in beef fat. For lighter and spicier, stop by **STICKY RICE** (4), a two-faced Thai-street-food stall—one side is dedicated to noodles and the other to curries and rice dishes. You can also go old-school: Micah Wexler used to be a fine-dining chef before he created **WEXLER'S DELI** (5), where he cures his own lox and smokes his own pastrami. Or go

older-school at **TACOS TUMBRAS A TOMAS** (6). Tomas Martinez, a GCM mainstay for 20 years, serves massive helpings of juicy *carnitas* for just three bucks a plate. No, he's not new blood, but were you paying attention? *Carnitas* heap for three bucks!

Finish your tour-slash-binge with the chocolate cake at **VALERIE AT GCM** (7), then buy a box of petits fours as a gift—for your wife, who didn't make the trip, or for you, on the flight home.—BESHA RODELL



WHY I MOVED TO THE BEST COAST

Rising chef **Sara Kramer**, who runs Madcapra in Grand Central Market, explains the reason why she left her successful Brooklyn restaurant Glasserie for Los Angeles

• *"The most obvious reason I moved out to Los Angeles is the produce—not to mention the dedicated small farmers who grow it. And so much is available year-round. Digging deeper, though, L.A. is an intersection of so many widely varying cultures. The food landscape has a very strong sense of self, and even still, there is room for it to develop. Inspiration is everywhere."*

Laksa

@ CASSIA

A bowl of curry noodles at Bryant Ng's French-Asian hangout in Santa Monica booms with all the fish-sauce funk and spicy-coconut-milk kick that you'd get in Singapore. Pair with Cassia's piña colada.



Clams & Lardo Taco

@ B.S. TAQUERIA

Ray Garcia's heirloom-corn tortillas are so mind-altering they could probably turn any filling into magic. Do seafood and pork fat test the limits? Maybe, but in a great way.



Chicken Sandwich

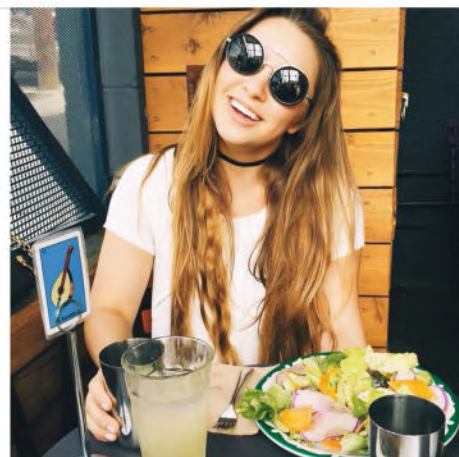
@ SON OF A GUN

Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo have mastered the golden ratio for chicken sandwiches. Buttermilk soothes, pickles snap, coleslaw crunches, and the jagged shattering of the chicken's deep-fried crust can be heard plain across the room.—G.S.

MODELS + TOAST =

Our Favorite Café

*They—the beautiful women with contracts and sky-high cheekbones and Eastern European names you can't pronounce—come to **Sqirl** in Silver Lake for the juices. You come here for the hearty grain bowls and the fancy toasts. And, of course, for them.*—BENJY HANSEN-BUNDY



“&” That's Enough

L.A.: We love the food, but maybe chill with the ampersand-laden names?

Faith & Flower Orsa & Winston Pine & Crane Knuckle & Claw



→ Cheggo, Far East Plaza

LET'S DO LUNCH! AT THE MALL?

• Shopping plazas are usually the sad refuges of dollar stores, nail salons, and RadioShacks (R.I.P.), but Chinatown's **Far East Plaza** is L.A.'s secret noodle-centric lunch oasis. At **Cheggo**, Roy Choi, the *papi chulo* of nationality-warping cuisine and flavor, dishes hefty rice and noodle bowls like the Chubby Pork Belly (gochujang-painted Kurobuta pork belly, Chinese broccoli, and Cotija cheese). Option B: **Pok Pok Phat Thai L.A.**, where Andy Ricker doles out quick-cooked noodle dishes ripped from the streets of Chiang Mai. Or head upstairs to **Ramen Champ**, where the house special—a bowl of noodles soaking in a light shiitake-forward consommé—won't leave you needing a 3 p.m. nap.—K.P.

One That Still Matters

Small Plates, Big Idea: a.o.c.

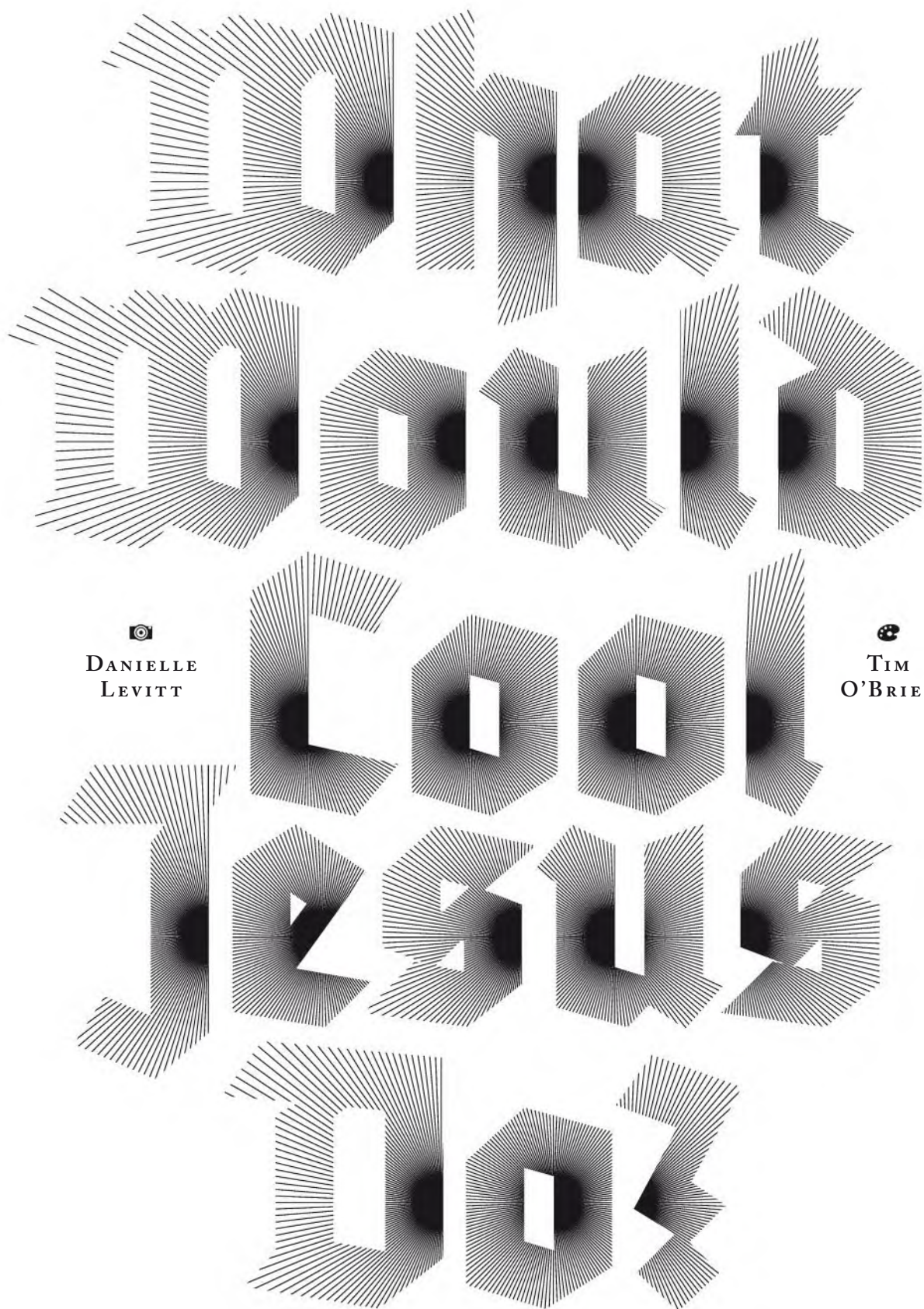
• Before you leave town, pay homage to one of its earliest food geniuses. **Suzanne Goin**, 49-year-old chef and co-owner of three of L.A.'s best restaurants, didn't set out to change her native city's food culture. “Really the idea began not as a tapas bar,” says the woman who introduced her city to the term when she opened a.o.c. in 2002. “It was

more that I wanted to offer lots of tastes, family-style.” The small-plates revolution she sparked has burned its way not just across the Los Angeles Basin but all over the country. Never one to get lazy, Goin remains at the cutting edge of the dining scene, and her foresight extends beyond the size of the plates to L.A.'s ongoing hood boom: “Our mission has always been to



create restaurants that appeal to us, in neighborhoods we like.” Funny, Suzanne: Our mission has always been to eat your delicious food wherever it is.—AMY WALLACE



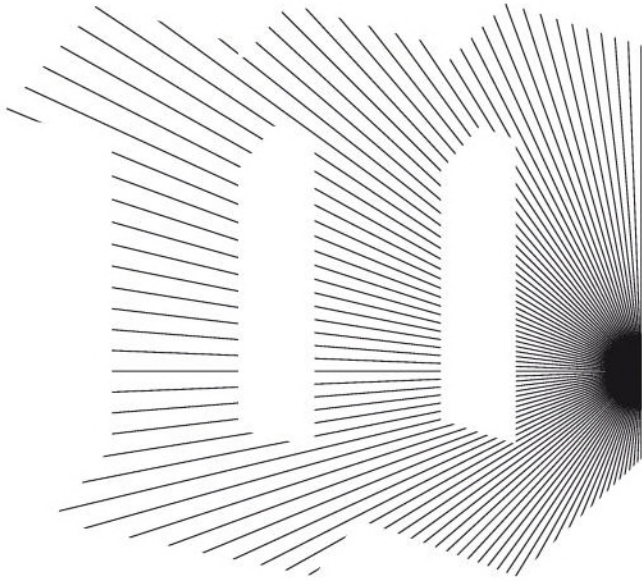


DANIELLE
LEVITT



TIM
O'BRIEN

IT'S THE CHURCH of choice for BIEBER and DURANT. It's where the cool kids spend Sunday morning after Saturday night at the club. For ye of little faith, it's hard to make sense out of **hillsong**. Is it legit? Is it a hipster cult? And why's everyone wearing Saint Laurent? GQ's *Taffy Brodesser-Akner* joins the flock to find out if Christianity can really be this cool and still be Christian



What if I told you I had a Justin Bieber story that would break your heart? Or at the very least, put an asterisk on what you think of him? No, listen: About five years ago, Pastor Carl got a phone call. Carl is one of the lead pastors at Hillsong NYC, a mega-church so reputedly, mystifyingly cool that cable-news outlets cover its services like they're Kardashian birthday bashes at 1 Oak. On the other end of the line was one of Carl's best friends, Judah Smith, another mega-pastor who also happens to be the chaplain for the Seattle Seahawks. "I need you to help me with a young man," Pastor Judah said, and Pastor Carl rushed to agree, because helping is Carl's thing, and the young man was, yes, Justin Bieber.

In general, people are critical of Justin Bieber for his many alleged human-rights abuses—I heard he once used a wheelchair to cut in line at Disneyland—and this upsets Pastor Carl, because Justin "lives his life on Front Street," which is a southern way of saying that we can see all that he does, while we get to conduct our sins in relative anonymity. But no Christian, no *person*, could live under the scrutiny that Justin faces, says Pastor Carl. "This boy is 21. He's in a horribly toxic world. He is trying to do his best to figure this out. He has never been anybody but who he has professed to be, which is a work in progress."

Last year, Justin moved in with Carl and his family for a month and a half, and they worked through stuff. During that time, Carl says, he saw tabloid reports about horrible things Justin was supposedly doing, when meanwhile Justin had been sitting there in his kitchen the whole time.

It is helpful to think of Justin Bieber here, at this point in his life, as a biblical character at the very bottom of a Jobian well of his own making. He had been caught being monstrous to just about everyone around him. He seemed to be spending more time with drugs than with Jesus. His music was bad. There was a petition circulating online to deport him back to

Canada. I may have signed it. But one day, according to Carl, Justin looked in the mirror and he was ravaged by feelings of loss. He got on his knees and he cried. "I want to know Jesus," Justin Bieber sobbed to Pastor Carl. And so together they prayed. Suddenly, Justin was overcome by the Gospel, and he said, "Baptize me." And Pastor Carl said, "Yes, buckaroo"—he really does call Bieber buckaroo, and now you should, too—"let's do this. Let's schedule a time." But Justin Bieber couldn't be Justin Bieber for one minute longer. "No, I want to do it now." And Pastor Carl saw salvation in Justin's eyes, and knew that his baptism couldn't come quickly enough.

Hillsong, which began in Australia, has outposts all over the globe, from Kiev to Paris to Buenos Aires. The church landed in New York City in 2010, with a branch at the Manhattan nightclub Irving Plaza, a branch at a theater in Times Square, and a branch in an auditorium at Montclair State University. On any given Sunday, Hillsong NYC saves the souls of 8,000 people, and what souls: Justin Bieber, yes, but also Kendall Jenner and Selena Gomez and Kevin Durant and Bono. "People say we cater to celebrities," Pastor Carl tells me. "And I say, yes, we do. Celebrities deserve a relationship with God. Celebrities deserve a place to pray." So do all of God's children, he says. And so they save seats in a special section for celebrities, but also for people in wheelchairs and single mothers who were running late. But it's easier for God's children to find a peaceful home in which to pray than it is for, say, Damon Dash.

Anyway, I wasn't done with the Justin Bieber story. So Justin wanted/needed a baptism posthaste, and Pastor Carl and Pastor Judah and Justin Bieber got into a car, and one of the church's body men drove them in one of the church's Suburbans to the Manhattan hotel where Hillsong rents the pool for baptisms. But when they got there, hundreds of people stood waiting—someone had tipped off the tabloids. Pastor Carl called a friend whose apartment complex has a pool, but when they arrived, dozens of people were waiting there, too.

"So I called my boy," Carl says. Carl has many boys, but in this case his boy was Tyson Chandler, who was then on the New York Knicks. It was 2 A.M. by now. The Knicks had beaten the Miami Heat earlier that night. He knew Tyson lived in a fancy Upper West Side building with a pool. "I said, 'Bro, I'm in a jam here. I have JB with me, he wants to get baptized.' He's like, 'Done. Easy.'" But they arrive and there's no access to the pool; it's too late. Then Tyson realizes he might have another solution. He reminds Carl that he's seven feet tall and that his bathtub was built to spec. Justin Bieber is slightly tinier than that, and so they go upstairs to Tyson's place, and Tyson's wife makes some food and lays down some towels and Justin gets into the tub, and down Justin Bieber goes, and he comes out of the water, and he is reborn.

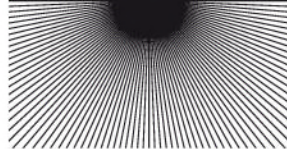
And that is an image that will stick with you, let me tell you: Justin Bieber, on his knees in Tyson Chandler's bathtub, wet and sobbing against Pastor Carl's chest, so unable to cope with

being himself that he has to be born anew, he has to be declared someone entirely different, in order to make it through the night.



Pastor Joel (left, with The Hat) and Pastor Carl





Jesus Christ, Superstar

Pastor Carl is spreading the gospel of Jesus the way the Lord always intended: one selfie-with-a-celebrity at a time. Let's scroll...

So there's this hat. If you show up for a Sunday service at Hillsong NYC, it'll be the first thing you notice about the audience, or at least it was the first thing I noticed, which is: They're all wearing this hat. Consider how unusual it is for people to wear the same hat if they aren't, say, working at Wendy's, or on a baseball team.

The style of the hat is hard to describe. There's maybe a hint of a cowboy hat? And a dose of porkpie? From some angles it looks like a plain old mall fedora, but "normally you have a more oval brim that should curve down in the front and snap up at the back," says a friend of mine, a milliner, when I send her a picture of the hat. "This is just nothing."

But it's not nothing. It's what they're *all* wearing, like a badge or a uniform.

"What is with the hat?" I asked someone in the audience near me during my first visit. "What do you mean?" answered the man, who was wearing the hat. I looked at his eyes hard and waited.

According to the results of my exhaustive investigation, the hat first appeared five or six years ago when Pastor Joel wore it. In his American press clippings, which begin around 2010, the year Pastor Joel (Houston) and Pastor Carl (Lentz) established Hillsong's first American branch, Pastor Joel is basically never not with the hat. And at some point you have to acknowledge that a large group of people in New York City adopting the fashiony choices of their spiritual leaders is a peculiar thing, but also an indication that whatever these leaders are doing, they are doing it very effectively. They are leading. They are influencing.

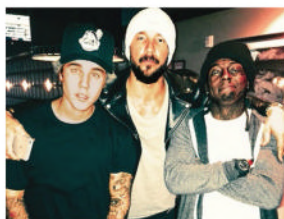
Onstage the music began and a unisex band of Christian genetic marvels materialized, buoyant and shiny with salvation. Some had guitars and man buns, some had sidecocked beanies. All with microphones, all with very shiny hair, all with expressions of serenity as they swayed and sang the songs of Hillsong Music, which has sold through its various arms tens of millions of CDs about salvation and shame and bathing in the mercy of Jesus's blood, and whose music is the only music you will hear inside a Hillsong church. When they moved, they raised their hands to the heavens, but also they stood with their palms open, wrist side up, a rhythmic and patient explaining, as if to say: *What are you gonna do?*

The music of Hillsong is a catalog of Selena Gomez-grade ballads, with melodies that all resemble one another, pleasingly, like spa music. They call to mind deeply sincere love songs, if it were appropriate to put phrases like *my savior on that cursed tree* and *furious love laid waste to my sin* and *suffered violence healed my blindness* and *facedown where mercy finds me first*. Tonally and tunelessly, it's a Jonas Brothers song. Lyrically, it's a hymn, and yet the singing is hot-breathed and sexy-close into microphones. It made my body feel confused.

I was witnessing the logical conclusion of an evolutionary convergence between coolness and Christianity that began at the dawn



With NBA star Amar'e Stoudemire



With Bieber and Lil Wayne



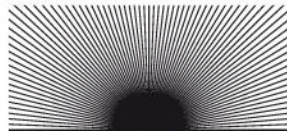
With Jay Z (left) and Kevin Durant



With Russell Wilson



With Jeremy Lin



of the millennium, when progressive-minded Christians, terrified of a faithless future, desperately rended their garments and replaced them with skinny jeans and flannel shirts and piercings in the cartilage of their ears, in a very ostentatious effort to be more modern and more relatable. Which is why, today, you can find ironically bespectacled evangelicals in Seattle and graphic designers soliciting tithes with hand-drawn Helvetica flyers in San Diego. You can walk into mega-churches all over the country where the pastor will slap on a pair of leather pants and drop the F-bomb *BOOM how do you like me now??*

But doesn't it always feel like they're trying too hard? Those guys make me think of *Starman*, when Jeff Bridges is trying to say "Yo, what's up?" to Karen Allen but he says "I send greetings" instead.

The book on Hillsong, however—the other book, lowercase *b*—is that they're the real article: the world's first genuinely cool church. "The music! The lights! The crowds!" begins an incredulous woman narrating a CNN segment on Hillsong NYC in smarmy CNNese. "It looks like a rock concert. And the lines around the block are enough to make any nightclub envious." The chyron reads "Hipster preacher smashes stereotypes." They call Pastor Carl a hipster—ABC actually said "hipster heartthrob"—and Carl says he doesn't know what that means, and he wears a motorcycle jacket when he says this.

Like everyone else at Hillsong, Pastor Joel is unwilling to acknowledge that there's something going on here, vis-à-vis the hat, vis-à-vis the entire fashion-forward, Disney Channel teen, aggressively accessorized aesthetic of the place. It is a non-issue to him. Yes, he tells me, sure, he likes clothes. But that's the end of it. What he means to say is that lots of people like clothes... and anyway, why am I asking him? I should ask Pastor Carl about the clothes, he tells me. What Pastor Carl does, he says—that's intentional, and then he laughs. So I did, I asked Pastor Carl, and he said he really doesn't think about it, okay maybe he does sometimes, but hey, he asked, turning it around, what about me? Aren't I thinking about it when I show up to an interview in my whole head-to-toe Gap thing? My whole neutrally attired thing? That was a decision, too, Carl pointed out, wasn't it?

Before the service had begun that day, a woman in her early twenties who was saving the entire row for latecomer friends told me she had been coming to Hillsong for two years, that every week she brings more and more friends because where else in New York can you find such a spiritual place? She used to go to a Greek Orthodox church—every single person I met at Hillsong was a churchgoer somewhere else before he or she began going to church at Hillsong—but it was long and boring there and she was doing it out of family obligation. I told her I could relate. She told me she liked that



Pastor Carl can give off a rock-star vibe, though it may be hard to tell from this photo.

the pastors here sounded like her. “And they encourage me to be better.” I asked her what that meant, and she told me that I had to understand that it wasn’t easy out there. That her job was stressful and that holding these seats for her friends, who are always late, was stressful. When her gang showed up, three songs in, five of them were wearing the hat.

And all around the church, that is the story the congregation tells from beneath their hats: that finally there are clergymen who look familiar, who offer messages that relate to their actual lives, who accept that they’ve lived in New York long enough to know it won’t fly to smear gay people, or tell women to go home and have kids, or expect young, bright, beautiful, maybe-cool people to dress humbly and plainly and ignore the thrills of modern life in a mega-city. This church is the one, finally, that really is different. All are welcome here in their rubber pants. All are welcome here in their funny, nothing hats.

01-16 / p.59

*Gentlemen’s
Quarterly*

Pastor Carl’s sermon on this day was part of a several-week series he has been doing called “Dig a Little Deeper.” He tells us that we all have headlines in our lives, but that we’re not living an authentic life unless we dig a little deeper and find our stories. “You are divorced” is maybe your headline, but the story is that you are searching for a better life. “You are an addict” is maybe your headline, but your story is that you have survived a lot and have chosen to walk with Jesus.

After the service, Pastor Carl’s driver-slash-right-hand, Joe Termini—yet another beautiful human, with eyes the color of the Pacific Ocean, shellacked hair like a superhero, and a sparkle-smile with thousands of teeth, all pointed just at me—says he wants to bring me over to Carl. I say that’s very nice of him, and he says, “People tell me they can’t believe how nice we all are, like is it for real? And I say, yes, we’re nice people. We’re happy people. Why is that so hard to believe?”

In the greenroom, I join Carl and Joel and Carl’s wife, Laura. The three of them met at Hillsong International Leadership College in Australia. Joel’s father had started Hillsong in Australia, and it merged with Joel’s grandfather’s church. That’s a tough subject, though, since it was revealed in 1999 that Joel’s grandfather, Frank, had molested a 7-year-old boy. Frank resigned from the church and spent his last years in a dementia salad, a raving lunatic by all accounts. There’s a story that no one will confirm for me that before he lost his wits, he asked to meet with the boy at a McDonald’s in Australia, at which he offered him \$10,000 and said he needed to be forgiven, please please forgive him so he could get into heaven. Frank died after having a stroke in the shower, and maybe Joel and his family and all of Australia sighed with relief then, but still that seems like way too good a death for that guy.

Joel was just a teenager when that happened and he’ll answer any question about his grandfather. He tells me that he considered changing his last name, that he wanted nothing to do with him or any of it, and also that he believes Jesus probably eventually forgave old Frank, because that’s what Jesus does. What is striking about this is how admirable it is to answer questions about something so ugly, but it is also inherent

to Joel’s Christianity: People sin. We all sin. But time went on, and Joel found his calling, writing most of Hillsong’s music and shepherding it into global success.

One day Joel was in Manhattan and there was a rainstorm. He sought refuge under the canopy of what happened to be the Salvation Army headquarters, which was maybe a sign. He was struck by the idea that Hillsong might make a go of it in a city like this, that a city like this—picture him surveying the miscreants walking by under their umbrellas—might really need Hillsong, and he walked around for the next few days and all he saw were signs confirming his sign. He called up Carl, who was now living in Virginia with Laura, now his wife, and he said, “What if we were to start a Hillsong in New York?” And now it’s five years later and here they are, surrounded by 8,000 congregants every Sunday.

There in the greenroom we talked about faith for a few minutes, about how the media (*continued on page 97*)



He's delightfully weird in that way pro sports rarely accommodates anymore. J. R. SMITH, you might say, lives on another planet—and he can hit a jumper from there, no problem. But how's one of the NBA's freest spirits (and most notorious partyers) getting along since being shipped out to the Midwest? Um, pretty well, as Cleveland's own DEVIN FRIEDMAN—and his buddies from high school—discovered one night

© TURE LILLEGRAVEN

J.R.
Smith



ALWAYS

P
E
N

IS



WHEN WE PULL UP, they have Dave Matthews playing on the outdoor speakers. Night has fallen on Pepper Pike, Ohio, and behind the music we can make out the song of darkness whistling through the suburban forests, the rustling of leaves, and the shifting of a far-off (I'm guessing) Lexus luxury utility vehicle on a homeward vector toward a remote-controlled four-car garage. We exit J. R. Smith's white Mercedes and walk to the door. And as we walk, what should suddenly appear before us but two deer—a mother and a fawn—nibbling cold November lawn grass. *Oh Jesus*, I think, *this is going to be fantastic*. After all, if J. R. Smith had a theme song, it might be called “The Opposite of Dave Matthews.” And here we are, not only listening to dad rock, but watching two suburban deer listening to dad rock in the yard of Megan Fellingner, my old friend from the Shaker Heights, Ohio, high school swim team.

Man, I thought to myself as we watched the deer, what a strange expatriation you must be living through, J. R. Smith. What a great distance you've traveled, in not even a year, since the days when you were still the shooting guard for the New York Knicks. Since you were living in that dope rental apartment in Manhattan—“There was *too* much to do. That was trouble!” you will tell the dinner-party guests tonight. Since you were dating Rihanna! Or at least, according to your Twitter account, not officially *not* dating Rihanna. Since a kid at Harvard published an impressive study that surmised—by dint of an exhaustive comparison of all NBA players' performances on Sundays versus the rest of the week—that you were the biggest partyer currently in the league. Since you tweeted pictures of reality-TV stars' butts in your hotel room on road trips. Since you accumulated what *The Wall Street Journal* described, super *Wall Street Journal*-y, as “the NBA's Most Diversified Portfolio of Infractions”—like untying opposing players' shoes during foul shots or elbowing dudes in the nuts. Since you drove around New York City in a \$450,000 Gurkha armored truck and got in fights on the court and pissed off Phil Jackson and became one of the favorite subjects of the flesh-eating sportswriters at the *New York Post*.

And now here you are in Cleveland, Ohio. Where I grew up. Sure, I thought, you've been here for almost a year. But have you *really* seen Cleveland? And when Megan Fellingner said, *Hey, I'm having some friends from the neighborhood for dinner, why don't you come by?* I thought: What better way to show him his new city than by taking him to *that*?

As we drove here, I asked J.R. what he thought when he was traded. *Were you*, I said, *like*, “*Oh man, I have to live in Cleveland?*”



“Honestly?” he said, piloting his German spacecar through a desolate web of interstates. “I was petrified. Seriously. I didn’t know what to expect. I thought: The weather is gonna be horrible. There’s going to be nowhere to go out to eat. There’s going to be nowhere to party.”

Future—“Real Sisters”—was on his car stereo. The spacecar dampened ambient noise so severely that the Cleveland we passed through—the unlit bungalows of Brook Park, the burn-off flame over one of Cleveland’s last operational steel plants—felt immaterial, like a “gritty” title sequence for a new season of *True Detective*.

Is it the last place, I asked, voicing the fear we all have as Cleveland sports fans, *people want to play?*

“There,” J.R. said. “And probably Utah.”

Leaving the deer to their supper now, we approached the door. There they all were, the dinner guests, crowded around the kitchen island, bathed in buttery light. *J.R., this might be the most boring night of your entire star-crossed life*, I thought.



AND THEN WE ARE inside the house and they're all here, staring at us. Surprised! (No one knew J.R. was coming.) Dewy-eyed! Totally pleasant! In normal clothes, the kind of clothes you and I might be wearing right now in our normal houses! Not just my old pal Megan (I once threw her mom into the pool! One of those stories you think is hilarious until you try it

out at a rehearsal dinner) and her husband, the affable Rob. Jody and Heather Herzog, who own three Fleet Feet shoe franchises! Ted and Lisa Bryan from down the block! Stacy and Jon Stoller, who do something and live somewhere!

Megan proffers a bottle of Macallan and J.R. is all like, *For sure, Macallan, fill it all the way up*. He doesn't drink much of it. In fact, I don't see him drink a sip. But he knows how to be a good guest. And then it isn't long before all the kids come in from wherever they were and just stare at J. R. Smith like he can't see them, too. And J. R. Smith just loves it. It seems to make him physically stronger. He has grown an inch. J. R. Smith, turns out, really likes to please people.

One of the kids delivers this little rehearsed question: *Excuse me J.R. I love basketball in fact I just came from basketball I love to learn would you help me with my jump shot later?* And J.R. says yeah of course he'll help the kid with his jump shot. Then he says, "Wait, when you're playing do you ever pass it?" And the kid says yes. And J.R. says, "Man, don't pass it. Shoot! Every time you get it, shoot." And everyone just falls out. Because that's the bad rap on J.R.! But see, J.R. is making it okay for you to laugh at J.R.

This, by the way, is the insolvable, fascinating, sports-geek-worthy problem of J. R. Smith. He is the most beautiful shooter in America. I mean maybe Steph Curry is more beautiful, fine, if you want to argue that. But who really cares, because the point is J. R. Smith is a beautiful basketball player. But he also terrifies you. He is so good, he can actually lose the game for you. He is one of the few people in professional sports whose talent is actually a liability. If he didn't know he could do almost anything, he wouldn't always be so tempted to try. This is the man who said that he would name his autobiography *Open Shots Are Boring*. What I mean is, if you got points for difficulty, for audacity (and for being suspended by the league for punching Boston Celtics [who totally deserved it] in the playoffs), then J. R. Smith would atomize the competition and be an All-Star every year. But as it is, he is a guy who comes off the bench for a very good basketball team to provide "spark." Who averaged about 11 points per game for the Cavs last year. J. R. Smith is a beautiful basketball player who sometimes, but inevitably, breaks your heart. Before unbreaking it. Before breaking it again. It is why he is an object of fascination. He is the ur-figure for a certain type of sportswriter more interested in characters than stats. Anyway.

When the kids retreat, beaten back by their parents (*Give him some space! Stop staring at him!*), J.R. is like, "Man I'm *starving!* Isn't anyone going to ask me to eat?" And we all laugh at that, too. What a nice guy! J.R. helps himself to some tasty newfangled mashed-potato thing, some delicious flank steak carved up right there by Rob Fellingner, some kind of broccoli that had been murdered in a pot and displayed gruesomely before us like the limp quarry of a house cat. Everyone's feeling comfortable now, and the questions are rapid-fire. *What did you think of China*

when you played there? "China was the worst place I've ever been in my life." *What do you think about Ohio not passing that marijuana-legalization initiative?* "Man, if you'd passed it, I wouldn't have to leave in the off-season!" *How can you concentrate when you're shooting free throws and everyone's yelling?!* "That's easy. It's when you're in Utah and people are shouting the N-word that's tough." *Really?* we all say. "Really," he says. "Really."

What about Shump's hair? I ask a little later, about his teammate Iman Shumpert, who wears a kind of retro flattop. *What do you think of that? Do you think he looks like Grace Jones? Are you pro Shump's hair?*

"No," he says, laughing. "No, I'm not."

The bottom line is: What a guest J. R. Smith is. If you're having a dinner party with fortysomethings at your house in a mild suburb of any city, you really ought to think about inviting 30-year-old basketball star J. R. Smith. I have to drag him away from a conversation about the merits of golf courses in Cleveland so we can make it on time to the charity event he's due at. On his way out, he promises to join Megan for a foursome at the Mayfield Sand Ridge country club.



LET'S GET BACK TO the hairstyles of the Cleveland Cavaliers for a minute. Because this is journalism. And at another point in the evening I will succeed in breaking J.R. down about LeBron's hair.

"I tell him you can't have *everything*," J.R. says. "I tell him all the time: You can't have it all! You have to give up one thing, and it just so happened it's your hair. If

someone told me I'm gonna give you \$600 million but I'm going to take your hair? *Take my hair!*"

From Pepper Pike, I direct J. R. Smith west, toward downtown Cleveland and the Quicken Loans Arena for his charity event. J.R. doesn't know Cleveland, really. He knows the West Side a little, he knows how to get to the practice facility, the arena. Pretty much the rest of the city is just a blank space overlaid by the metallic glow of Google Maps.

"I loved that," J. R. Smith says when I ask about the dinner party. "I'm telling you, I love doing stuff like that. That was super dope."

I kind of should have known J. R. Smith would be more than comfortable around some soccer moms. I should have known it because he's from suburban New Jersey. I should have known it when I picked him up in his own mild Cleveland suburb. When I saw a friendly neighbor wife in yoga pants leave the house next door and wave at us as she took her yellow Lab for a walk. (This friendly neighbor wife was, J.R. tells me, the wife of Cleveland Browns All-Pro left tackle Joe Thomas. Arguably the most loved athlete in Cleveland, besides LeBron James.) J.R. says he's living a different kind of life now. He had an epiphany over the summer, and he immediately broke up with the woman he'd been dating, got engaged to the mother of one of his daughters, and has been living with the two of them since August, as a family.

"I couldn't just keep jumping onto another ship without knowing the direction it's going," J.R. tells me. "I've been with some of the most quote-unquote beautiful women in the world. But they're so ugly on the inside."

(continued on page 99)

**"I TELL [LEBRON] YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING,"
J.R. SAYS. "YOU HAVE TO GIVE UP ONE THING, AND
IT JUST SO HAPPENED IT'S YOUR HAIR."**



So, Here's
How This
Will Go



1st

IA caucuses



9th

NH primaries



20th

NV Democratic
caucus
and SC GOP
primary



23rd

NV GOP
caucus



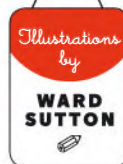
27th

SC Democratic
primary



1st

Super Tuesday/
SEC primary



the **OVER- WHELMED MAN'S GUIDE** to the **ELECTION**

Are you more confused than you were four years ago? Can't tell the difference between Vox and Politico? Never heard of either? In an age when there's a pundit for every ridiculous point of view, it's tough to know where to focus. Well, fret not, fellow patriot. Here now, your sane and savvy guide to following this year's crazy election



DAVID AXELROD
Chief campaign strategist for Barack Obama

STUART STEVENS
Chief campaign strategist for Mitt Romney



How to Follow the Campaigns Like You're Running One

Three lessons from the Svengalis who squared off in the last election

ALL THESE POLLS ARE AN ABOMINATION

David Axelrod: Polls are one of the things that fight good coverage. They're a good way for news organizations to get attention, but a lazy way to cover an election.

Stuart Stevens: When you look at these national polls, they're meaningless, because these people aren't going to vote.

THE PRESS ISN'T AS TOUGH AS IT USED TO BE

DA: What happens now is you get reporting from big events or reporting from younger reporters. It's not as penetrating as it should be.

SS: I would think covering a campaign would be the epitome of your career rather than the start of your career.

DA: There are good reporters, but it's just harder. They have to file incessantly to keep up with the lack of a news cycle.

SS: The great irony is that the largest beneficiary of all this campaign spending is media organizations. Super-PACs spend most of their money still on media. So the campaign industry spends more money on media, yet media spends less covering campaigns. It's an odd paradox.

SOMETIMES MEANINGLESS THINGS ARE MEANINGLESS

DA: You and I both know the media covers every day like it's election day. Everything gets treated with the same energy. All these decisive events, very few end up being decisive. I think it's the sum total of events—when voters finally focus—that adds up to a portrait. Candidates rise; they get tested; the intensity ratchets up, because you're auditioning for the toughest job on the planet.

SS: I don't think anyone can get elected president without being humiliated. It's how you deal with that humiliation.

—AS TOLD TO JASON ZENGERLE

MORE → The full conversation on the 2016 race → GQ.com

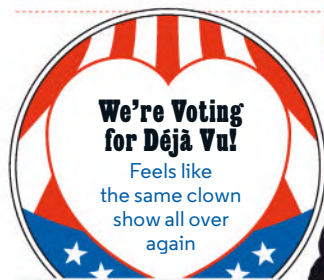
Pro Tips

The reporters we pay attention to? Here's what they pay attention to

→ On Twitter, it's not just about whom you follow, but when, says *Meet the Press* moderator **Chuck Todd**. "The best time is between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m., before it becomes a debate and when it's just newspapers and reporters sending out their best stories."

→ What's it really like on the trail? Now that virtually every reporter is on Instagram, that's where the most authentic view is, too. The empty auditoriums, the ungarded candidates. "Campaigns are so much more than seamless events," says frequent 'grammer **Ashley Parker** of *The New York Times*. Also check out *The Boston Globe's* **Matt Viser** and *The Washington Post's* **Dave Weigel**.

→ Conservative media isn't known for laughs. Enter **Andrew Stiles** of the *Washington Free Beacon*, who is "probably the funniest writer doing anything with politics right now," says **Katherine Miller**, political editor at BuzzFeed. Stiles's imagined Trump-as-POTUS tweets have been particularly great: "My nuclear arsenal is massive. Thousands. @HulkHoganSecDef can u DM?"

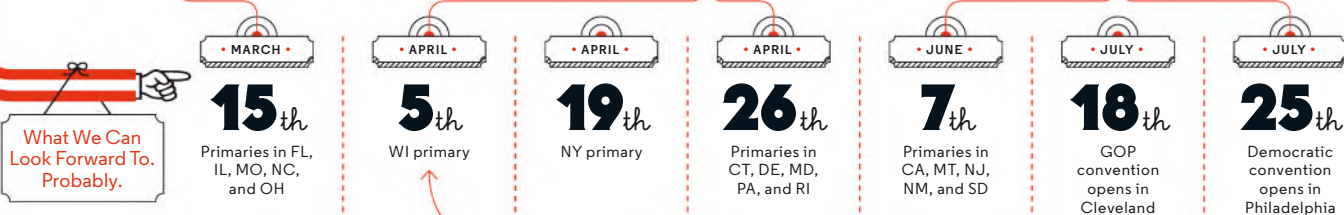


QUIXOTIC EGOMANIAC	2008	2012	2016
STATUS OF JOE BIDEN	Rudolph Giuliani	Newt Gingrich	Donald Trump
RADICAL IDEA	Running!	Grinning!	Meddling!
HOTSHOT STAT-HEAD NAMED NATE	Black for president	Self-deportation	Giant wall
PARTY FAVORITE ON THE SIDELINES	Nate Silver	Nate Silver	Nate Cohn
MEME	Al Gore	Chris Christie	Elizabeth Warren
UNQUALIFIED POLITICAL AUTHORITY	Shepard Fairey, "Hope"	Binders full of women	"Make America Great" hat
COOL MOVE TURNED LIABILITY	Joe the Plumber	Karl Rove	Dr. Ben Carson
	Sarah Palin	Romneycare	Texts from Hillary

Hillary releases March Madness bracket. Final Four? Ohio State, Ohio, Florida State, and Florida.

Candidates make perfunctory overseas trips: heavyweights to Israel, lightweights to Ireland, Trump to Ibiza.

Veep-pick fever! Start Googling Julian Castro and Nikki Haley.



Rick Santorum's supervisor refuses to give him any more time off; he glumly returns to Kinko's.

AXELROD: WILLIAM B. PLOWMAN/NBC/NBC NEWSWIRE/GETTY IMAGES; STEVENS: BOB DAEMMRICH/POLARIS; GIULIANI: ROB KIM/GETTY IMAGES; GINGRICH: PETE MAROVICH/GETTY IMAGES; TRUMP: JOSHUA LOTT/AP/GETTY IMAGES; WARREN: SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; BIDEN: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTIE: JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS FOR EDITORIAL PURPOSES ONLY.

JENNIFER RUBIN
columnist,
The Washington Post

Went out on a ledge early to declare the 2016 GOP primary a two-man race. Between Jeb Bush and Scott Walker.

DICK MORRIS
Clinton adviser turned sworn enemy

Citing outrage over Hillary's hidden e-mails, predicted a fierce Martin O'Malley surge. There's still time, Marty!

BILL KRISTOL
editor,
The Weekly Standard

Giddily broke the news that Joe Biden would be running for POTUS, tweeting "You can feel the Joementum!"

the WRONGEST

Wanna know what'll happen next? It's the opposite of whatever these fools say

PUNDITS in POLITICS

The Real Race Is for Your Phone

Bernie Sanders has a pic he'd like to show you

It wasn't so long ago that the only politician associated with Snapchat was Anthony Weiner—and that was because he clumsily wasn't using it. (His lewd shots were sent via Twitter.)

But now politicians are realizing the dick-pic-heavy app could help them win office, not just lose it in disgrace.

Twelve presidential candidates now have Snapchat accounts that they use to send out "behind-the-scenes" videos from the trail. Meanwhile, Snapchat has begun broadcasting curated highlights of election-year events and user-generated political commentary. So far, they're finding an audience: Nearly twice as many people ages

18 to 24 followed the first GOP debate through the app than followed it on TV. And it's TV the app is challenging: CNN reporter Peter Hamby recently joined Snapchat to launch a news operation. But the real game change could come in the way campaigns advertise on the app. Snapchat is selling campaigns ten-second video clips as well as the ability to overlay political messages on the content users are posting. (New Hampshire Snapchatters recently found an ad from John Kasich adorning their pics.) Is a political invasion just the sort of thing that could make a cool app start to seem lame? We'll see. Meantime, let's just do what we can to keep Weiner from discovering this thing, yeah?



Vicious anti-Clinton attacks air, secretly funded by a bummed Joe Biden.

Bernie Sanders agrees to bring 'Curb Your Enthusiasm' back for one more season.

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
26th	4th	9th	19th	8th
First presidential debate, Dayton, OH	Vice presidential debate, Farmville, VA	Second presidential debate, St. Louis	Third presidential debate, Las Vegas	Election day

Rumors surface about a late Romney run.

Will You Be My Blowhard?

With all the bloviators out there, it's tough to know whether you're hate-watching the right guy

I want to hear me some opinions. Preferably loud ones.

Awesome! Liberal or conservative?

LIBERAL

GOSH, CHOICES ARE HARD!

CONSERVATIVE

Like, Bernie Sanders liberal?

Do you suspect the Pope and Beyoncé are Marxists?

WELL, HE'S A LITTLE MUCH

OH, HELL YES

GODDAMN RIGHT

I MEAN, I WOULDN'T MALIGN THE POPE

Outta luck, pinko. Try Twitter.

Totally. So how do you feel about Obama?

Would you vote for Trump?

MAKES ME FEEL ALL...TINGLY!

COULD BE BETTER, I DON'T KNOW

THAT MANIAC? NO WAY

TOTALLY! MEXICANS TERRIFY ME

Which Simpsons character do you identify with more?

PRINCIPAL SKINNER

HOMER

Have you ever been told to please put your pants back on in public?

YES

NOT YET



"LEADERSHIP!"
"PLATITUDES!"
"HARRUMPH!"

At the Show

When scanning these pages for the 30 sharpest pieces in the fashion world, you can cherry-pick just a jacket or re-imagine your whole look. For instance: Do the rock 'n' roller thing the 2016 way with a lot of black—and a turtleneck instead of a T-shirt.

1

sunglasses
\$325 + pins
Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane

2

jacket \$1,610
John Elliott + Co

3

wallet chain \$3,445
Chrome Hearts

4

turtleneck \$1,390
Tom Ford

5

watch \$1,850
Oris



To the Gym

Fact: More people are checking out your style at the gym than on the street, so a promo tee and a pair of mesh shorts ain't gonna cut it. Instead, outfit yourself in some of the badass new high-tech fitness gear out there. Don't be afraid of loud colors—or of showing some skin.

6

sneakers \$150
Nike

7

watch \$250
Coach

8

windbreaker \$513
Stone Island

9

headphones \$300
Beats by Dr. Dre

10

tank top \$30
GapFit

for additional
credits, see
page 99.

→ The 30 coolest things to add to
your wardrobe right now

THE 2016 COMPLETE CLOSET OVERHAUL



SEBASTIAN
MADER

At the Office

We are living in a moment of maximalist suiting. Start with an aggressive pattern on your jacket and pants. Double down with a patterned shirt. Then add a pocket square, a tie bar, a briefcase, a watch, a double-breasted coat... (If you could see this guy's feet, you'd see he's wearing indigo blue socks, too.)

11

suit \$1,850
Canali

12

shirt \$295
Eleventy

13

coat \$1,483
Stone Island

14

briefcase \$2,380
Louis Vuitton

15

watch \$1,800
Baume & Mercier



On the Slopes

Either you can wear this full outfit and pretend your local bunny slopes are the dangerously glamorous runs at Gstaad, or you can channel a little of that Alpine spirit by mixing any one of these pieces into your everyday look, starting with that affordable sweater.

16

sunglasses \$540
Vuarnet

17

vest \$1,525
Moncler A

18

sweater \$55
Gap

19

watch \$200
Nautica

20

pants \$425
Aether Apparel

for additional
credits, see
page 99.



By the Beach

Surfing, skating, and trucker-capping were pioneered by weed-smoking California teenagers and dropouts, but now that look has been adopted by the high-fashion set. (You're looking at Gucci here, not a sunburned Cali surf brand.) The best part? These looks all have a vintage feel, so they mix well with the American classics in your closet.

21

jacket \$1,620
cap \$380
belt \$420
watch \$1,565
ring (bottom) \$330
bag \$1,850
Gucci

22

jeans \$198
Denim & Supply
Ralph Lauren

23

bracelets (front)
\$30 for three
Burkman Bros

24

silver necklace \$499
Cartography

25

ring (left) \$550
David Yurman
grooming by lisa-raquel for matrix
stylelink, set design
by nicholas des
jardins for mary
howard studio.

for additional
credits, see
page 99.

where to buy it?
go to gq.com/go/fashiondirectories



Way Out West

Sometimes getting dressed is more like getting into character, and no role is more dependable for winning the day and getting the girl than the Clint Eastwood western look. No matter where your sun sets this winter, you want to be riding off into it wearing a shearling coat.

26

jacket \$8,995
Lanvin

27

shirt \$715
Brunello Cucinelli

28

bag \$3,950
Ralph Lauren

29

bracelet \$77
Yuketan

30

watch \$1,500
Apple Watch
Hermès Cuff



What's the hardest thing about spending 40 years of your life behind bars? For one ex-con, it was finally getting out. **Kathy Dobie**

THE
CURIOUS
CASE
OF
THE
HOMESICK
ROBBERS

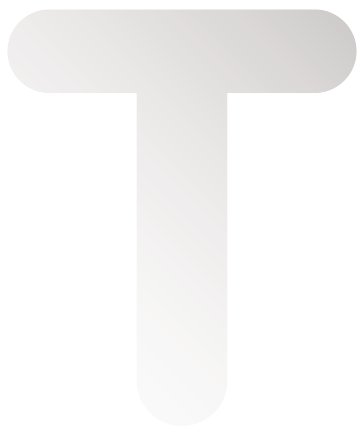


JONAH
SAMSON

GQ

75

tells the tale of a career criminal who missed prison so badly, he pulled a brazen reverse *Shawshank*—and damn near got away with it



The Many Prison Lives of Walter Unbehaun

A time line of time served, from Leavenworth to Atlanta.—HILARY ELKINS

PRISON FREEDOM

1964-1968

In and out of the pen for multiple car thefts.



EARLY 1969

Arrested in Arizona for stealing another car and defrauding an innkeeper; **gets 4 years.**

LATE 1969

Escapes from prison. While on the run, kidnaps a woman while stealing her car; **25-year sentence.**



1975

Released early to halfway house. Flees. Arrested in Nashville. **Back to prison for another 5 years.**



1980

Paroled. A year later, parole revoked.



1982

Put on work release. Arrested for home invasion and robbery. **Does 10 years.**



1992

Nearly six years of freedom. Starts a business refinishing porcelain tubs and sinks.



1998

Robs his first bank. Sent back to the joint for 13 years.



2012

Relocates to South Carolina.

2013

Knocks off another bank. Heads back to prison.



2016

Set for supervised release in February.

THE OLD MAN PARKED his car in the Dunkin' Donuts lot next to the BMO Harris bank and then had to make his way, crunching and squelching, over a sidewalk clogged with frozen snow. He moved slowly, a cane gripped hard in his right hand, breath smoking like a steam engine. It was only 26 degrees in Niles, Illinois, that morning, and the man was dressed in a dark goose-down jacket, a black turtleneck, jeans, and rubber-soled shoes. He had a thick brush of a mustache, white and bristly, and he wore steel-rimmed glasses that winked opaquely when they caught the sun.

Once inside the bank, the old man stumped over to the island counter and wrote on a deposit slip **THIS IS A HOLD UP**. Approaching one of the tellers, he pushed the slip under the glass and opened the left side of his jacket to show the woman a silver revolver stuck in his waistband. "I've only got six months to live. I've got nothing to lose," he told her, his voice cool and steady. Her hands were trembling as she pulled the wads of bills from her cash drawer. "I'm not gonna hurt you," he reassured her. The old man stuck the bills, just over \$4,000, into the pockets of his jacket and made his way back out into the cold. When he reached the street, he stopped, lit a cigarette, and stood there smoking. White clouds shrouded his face and dispersed. Then he tossed the butt to the ground and trudged back to his car.

Later the surveillance cameras inside the bank and mounted outside the Dunkin' Donuts would show that the robber left the bank at 9:43 A.M., didn't step into his car until 9:46, and then sat there for a full minute before leisurely backing out of his parking space and gliding away.

I

THAT EVENING, A NUMBER of Chicago media outlets reported on the holdup, illustrating the story with a fuzzy still of the robber from the bank's camera. A viewer called the Niles Police Department to say he was sure he'd sat near that guy at a restaurant bar that very afternoon, a place called The In-Laws. The old man had said his name was Wally and casually mentioned that he'd just gotten out of prison and was here to visit a former girlfriend. The caller believed the ex-girlfriend was a waitress at The In-Laws.

Also watching the news that evening was a probation officer who immediately recognized his client: 73-year-old Walter Unbehaun, a career criminal who had recently served 13 years for another bank robbery. The P.O. met with the authorities the next morning, and within hours two Niles police detectives and an FBI agent arrived at the restaurant to interview the waitress, a big-boned woman with dyed auburn hair. She was reluctant to give them any information at first, only admitting that, yes, her old boyfriend had dropped by the restaurant. She hadn't laid eyes on him in almost 15 years, and he just popped up out of nowhere, wanting to show her his slick new car and ask her out on a date. She wasn't interested in Wally anymore, but the agent still had to threaten her with arrest before she told them where he was staying.

After that, the search went quickly. The investigators drove to the Great Lakes Motel in North Chicago, where the owner confirmed that a Walter Unbehaun was checked into room 114. When they ran the plates on the gray Infiniti parked outside, they learned that the car had been rented by Unbehaun. The cops instructed the motel owner to ring Wally's room, tell him there was a problem with his bill, and ask him to come to the office. Then they set up across the street, in the parking lot of Flanagan's Restaurant & Lounge.

It was late afternoon, and the Great Lakes was still as a tomb. The parking lot was scrawled with ridges of encrusted lead-colored snow, and the winter sun was setting quickly, the light kaleidoscopic, when the old man stepped outside. The cops waited as the man clumped along, three steps, four, five... Then, when he got far enough from his room that he couldn't scurry back inside, they bounded into action, screeching into the motel parking lot, leaping from their cars, corralling him, guns drawn, and shouting, "Get down on the ground! Down on the fucking ground!" One of the officers, positioned behind the old man, grabbed his cane and tossed it.

The man raised his hands but stayed on his feet. "Officers, I'm not gonna fight you, but I need my cane," he said. "I just had my hip replaced." He was, by far, the calmest one there. As his arms were yanked down and his wrists handcuffed, he was asked, "Do you know why we're here?"

"Yeah, I know why you're here—because I robbed that bank," he replied. "Just take me home. I want to go home now."

"Home? You ain't going home!" the cops snorted. "You just robbed a bank, you're going to jail."

"Yeah...that's home," the old man replied. Then he offered to show them the gun he'd used during the robbery. "Make sure you put in your report I used a loaded piece," he later told the cops. "That will give me, what? Twenty more years?"

II

WALTER UNBEHAUN was arrested on Sunday, February 10, 2013, at about 4:30 P.M., roughly 30 hours after the bank robbery. His criminal record went back 50 years—convictions for stealing cars, armed robberies, a kidnapping during one of his two escapes from federal penitentiaries. All in all, the old man had spent over 40 years of his life behind bars.

After his arrest, Unbehaun was transported to the Niles station house. At about ten that night, the three law-enforcement officers who had tracked him down, FBI

Opposite, Walter and his pet Chihuahua lived alone in a South Carolina trailer. But every once in a while, other animals would appear to him.



special agent Chad Piontek and Niles detectives Joseph Paglia and Jerry Mercado, arrived at the station to interview him, walking into a harshly lit cinder-block room lined with painted steel doors, each one labeled **HOLDING**. When Paglia unlocked one of these doors, the prisoner was lying on the bed with his shoes kicked off.

"Walter," Paglia said.

"Call me Wally," he replied.

"Okay, Wally, we're gonna take you to the interview room."

"Officers, I want to stay right here," Wally announced. "I've lived in cells like this, I'm good here." He wasn't gonna give them anything if they made him leave, he said, so the cops dragged three chairs inside the concrete closet and, crowded elbow to elbow, began interviewing him.

This was the deal, Wally told them: He'd robbed the bank because he was tired of life outside of prison. It had been almost two years, and he wanted to be back around "my own people." He had a special request for Agent Piontek: He wanted to do his time at a maximum-security joint. He had friends in most of them, he said, and he didn't care about being locked down for hours on end. In max, you get your own cell, and Wally liked to paint. Being on lockdown gave him plenty of time to do his artwork.

"You wanted to go to jail so bad, why didn't you just turn yourself in?" Piontek asked.

"Because that's not how the game is played," Wally replied. "I'm a criminal, you're cops. I commit a crime, you gotta catch me. I left you guys enough clues. I wasn't hiding. I knew there was a video camera in Dunkin' Donuts. I parked right there. You saw me leave. Did I run?"

He'd picked a bank to rob because "I'm not gonna do any candy-store bullshit," he told the cops. He wouldn't take money from a "working man." But a federally insured bank? No one loses. He asked about the teller—he wanted to be sure she was all right. "I wouldn't have hurt her," he said. As for saying he had only six months to live, well, not true; he just threw it in there so she would know he was serious. But when the cops asked where he got the gun, Wally gave them a cold stare. "I'm not gonna give you that. There's a code. I won't squeal."

The officers could've talked to him all night. He was like a movie, Paglia thought, a character out of... "*The Shawshank Redemption*," Mercado added, thinking of Brooks, the character who gets released from prison after 50 years inside and can't bear the loneliness of his freedom. "We referenced that movie to him," Mercado says. "But he didn't know it."

The next morning, when the FBI agents arrived to collect him, Wally said good-bye to Paglia and Mercado. "Thank you for sending me home," he told them.

Mercado: "And we're both looking at each other like *What just happened?*"

Paglia: "I've never had someone thanking me for arresting them so they could go back to prison. I went home that night, I felt good about myself, like I helped the guy out!"

III

I MET WALLY IN PERSON for the first and only time at the federal lockup in Chicago, a temporary holding facility. He had been sentenced; he was just waiting to be shipped to the prison where he would do his time. He'd been given a mercifully light 46 months for the bank robbery and another 18 for parole violation, though 12 of those months were to be served concurrently. With time served, he'd be out in about three years.

The folks at Metropolitan Correctional Center Chicago had given us an hour, setting us up in the visiting room on the eighth floor of the jail. Two weeks later, when Wally was moved to his new "home"—alas, not a max but the minimum wing of Petersburg prison in Hopewell, Virginia, a place he called "kindergarten"—we weren't allowed visitations.

When I was escorted into the visiting room, Wally was already sitting there, wearing a loose-fitting orange jumpsuit, filling up the chair, legs akimbo, aluminum walker at his side, his gaze both direct and lively. Almost immediately I sensed a complete lack of bullshit. But genial as he was, and white-haired and stiff-limbed, there was an occasional arctic glint to his eyes. (*continued on page 95*)

→ **David Bowie's**
back with a new album
this month, and his
razor-sharp 1970s
new-wave look is back
in style, too. So we're
channeling the slick
spirit of the Thin White
Duke—with the help of
17-year-old model and
Instagram sensation
Lucky Blue Smith



SEBASTIAN KIM

REBEL REBEL



«
three-piece suit \$2,895
Dolce & Gabbana

•
shirt \$795
Dolce & Gabbana

coat \$795
Tommy Hilfiger

sunglasses
Gucci

scarf and socks
Paul Smith

bracelet
Cartier

shoes
Berluti

« «
jacket \$4,550
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

•
t-shirt \$590
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

bracelet
Renvi

watch
Cartier

LUCKY BLUE: YOUNG AMERICAN

"Put on your red shoes and dance the blues," mouths 17-year-old Lucky Blue Smith, kinda, as he glares at the camera. An electric fan's breeze ripples through his black dress shirt but budes his hair—slicked back in a pattern of combed crevices—not a millimeter. If he were in school on this sunny November Tuesday, it would be about fourth period. Instead, he's in a Williamsburg studio, opening and closing his mouth in a manner appreciably similar to someone who knows the words to David Bowie's "Let's Dance."

To describe Lucky Blue's model rise as "meteoric" is inaccurate. It's been more like the vertical beam of a laser, slicing up suddenly through the atmosphere at the peril of commercial aircraft. One could say he peaked at age 12 in his first-ever shoot, photographed by Hedi Slimane, and then, from that peak, was able to scout and scale peaks no one had seen before.

If Lucky owes 99 percent of his career success to the propitious couplings of those chromosomes that determine eye color (glacial), hair color (light enough brown to be rendered icy blond by regular bleachings), and chin shape (great), the remaining 1 percent can be divvied up among his possession of an affable personality, his being born into a family content to propel its members into fame, and cell phones. Cell phones enable Lucky to check in multiple times a day with the legion of fans (1.5 million on Instagram) he calls "Lucky Charms" (hopefully because someone told him to). Cryptic tweets of an address, a time, and the command "Come see me!" draw frenzied hordes right to him. A major component of Lucky's online persona is his *boyfriend experience*—a habit of flirting with fans en masse, with an illusion of directness.

His photo captions read as choose-your-own-adventures, in which the main characters are you ("bae") and Lucky: "let's go on an adventure [sun emoji]," suggests Lucky, shirtless as a seagull as he picks his way over a rocky shore.



"I like flirting," he says. "I want them to know that they're all drop-dead gorgeous. And me doing a flirty post—that's for their imaginations to do whatever they want with. I'm not gonna tell them what they should think about..."

I ask if he'd mind posting something while we talk. "I'll just say, 'Yo, what's up everyone... What are you guys up to?'" with five o's."

Is that Yooooo or toooooo?

"Tooooo," he says.

Before the second in which he publishes the tweet has passed, it receives both a FAV and an RT.

I ask if Lucky feels self-conscious posting vague sweet nothings ("endless smiles when

I'm with you") to a congregation of anonymous fans who instantly reply with equal zeal ("FUCK me"), knowing his parents—who, like Lucky, are practicing Mormons—will see them. "No," he responds without hesitation. "My parents have seen me flirt with girls in front of them, so they're kind of used to it." Two years ago, Lucky and his family (Mom, Dad, and three elder sisters—also models; also in the surf-rock band for which Lucky provides drums) quit their home in Spanish Fork, Utah, and set up camp in an agency-owned "models' apartment" in L.A. At the shoot, his father reveals the family will spend Thanksgiving in Utah

instead of at the apartment—a decision Lucky feels is "lame!" It's the only time he's anything but unfazed during the duration of the nine-hour ordeal.

Shortly before sunset, when the morning's Bowie soundtrack has given way to Rihanna and the shoot has moved outside, Lucky is instructed to stand precariously on the ledge of a roof six stories up. A team of adults hold their palms out toward him and tense their fingers as though their collective invisible grip can prevent him from slipping over the edge.

"You guys," says Lucky, laughing, "it's all good!"

That's about right.
—CAITY WEAVER

In style, as in music, a young Bowie could do it all. He tried on fashion personas (from space oddity to rockabilly dandy) the way the rest of us try on socks. The one constant? The man loved bold patterns—and shirts like his are now back on the racks.

«

shirt \$480
Neil Barrett

+

tank top \$40 (for three)
Calvin Klein Underwear

pants \$675
Dolce & Gabbana

suspenders
Topman

loafers
Bally

hat
The Hill-Side

necklace
Tiffany & Co.

bracelet
David Yurman

rooftop
Xoomba Loft, Brooklyn

»

shirt \$600
Jeffrey Rudes

+

pants
Versace

suspenders
Paul Stuart

bracelets
**Renvi (left)
Miansai**

watch
Cartier



Bowie had a way of making loose, wide pants look sophisticated rather than balloon-y and clown-like. The key? He always matched them with shirts that showed off all that Thin White Duke-ness.

«
shirt \$425
Orley at
MatchesFashion.com

+
pants \$495
3.1 Phillip Lim

shoes \$595
A.Testoni

socks
Paul Smith

necklace
Tiffany & Co.

bracelet
Cartier

hat
Stetson at **JJ Hat Center**

»
jacket \$2,900
Louis Vuitton

+
shirt \$850
pants \$650
Louis Vuitton

bracelet
Cartier

watch
Tiffany & Co.



»

coat \$5,050
Gucci

+

shirt \$360
pants \$690
shoes \$850
belt \$570
Gucci

bracelet
Renvi

scarf
J.Crew

» »

sweater \$930
Prada

+

denim shirt \$1,020
t-shirt \$460
pants \$1,020
Prada

necklace
Tiffany & Co.

store
**Rough Trade,
Brooklyn**

hair by didier malle. grooming by jodie boland using dior homme. produced by tricia sherman for baue productions. set design by juliet jernigan at clm.

where to buy it?
go to gq.com/go/fashiondirectories





Bowie never wore anything straightforward: Every look was somehow tweaked to make it more interesting. So even if you're a conservative prep, remember that one little twist (like layering stripes on more stripes) can be transformative.



At first, investigators couldn't believe what they'd found: a refrigerator truck, abandoned on the side of the road between Budapest and Vienna, stuffed with **71 corpses**. Perhaps they shouldn't have been surprised. The dead were refugees, migrants—call them what you want—desperate to escape turmoil in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and they'd taken extreme risks to enter Europe. Word of the horror didn't stop the wave of migration, nor will barbed wire or xenophobia—even after the Paris attacks in November. But now a slew of profiteers, traffickers, and politicians are exploiting the situation. Which is how a tragedy becomes a recurring nightmare

📺 *Sean Flynn* | 🎥 *Christopher Griffith*

LOST HIGHWAY

THE TRUCK IS EMPTY

and waiting near the little city of Kecskenét, Hungary, in a parking lot that is quiet and dark because the waxing moon already has set and the sun won't rise for hours. It is a Volvo, with a white cab, six wheels, and a rectangular cargo box on the back that is big enough to haul freight but small enough not to draw attention on the road to Austria.

On the front of the cargo box, mounted above the cab, is a refrigeration unit, which looks like a large air conditioner: The truck used to haul chicken processed by a Slovak company called Hyza. The name is still on the side in brown, the Y replaced by a silhouette of a hen, even though Hyza had sold

the truck a year before, in 2014. The new owner, a Hungarian company that exists only on paper and doesn't pay its taxes, was supposed to remove the logo, as well as the slogan on the rear doors: "I taste so good because they feed me so well."

People are waiting to get into the empty truck. They have traveled for weeks from Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria, either directly or from a swollen, festering camp in Turkey, part of the largest human migration since World War II. Most of them have come very recently across the border with Serbia, where the Hungarian government is building a fence of barbed wire and chain link. A few of them had made it as far as Budapest, but they'd been stranded in a railway station with thousands of other refugees, so they've backtracked to Kecskenét to get in the truck that will get them to Austria and maybe beyond.

Fifty-nine of those waiting are men. Eight are women and four are children, one just a toddler. Each of those 71 people has paid hundreds of euros for a ride, but none of them are eager to get into the chicken truck. The size of the cargo box—eight feet wide and less than 20 feet long—and the number of bodies both are obvious, even in the dark, and the former is not reasonably large enough to accommodate the latter. There might be enough room for everyone to stand, but not to move.

They've been swindled. They paid smugglers thousands of dollars to get them from where they began to where they want to go, mostly Germany. They hoped for taxis or

Sprinter vans or plain sedans. Or they've come segment by miserable segment: huddled in an overloaded dinghy from Turkey to Greece, a long walk across Serbia, a longer wait in a detention camp in one country or another. They slept on cement at Budapest's Keleti train station until a young man in sunglasses and slicked hair sold them a ride to Vienna. Maybe they've been told their ride would be in the back of the truck. Surely none of them were told they'd be pushed in with 70 others, because none of them would have agreed.

But what is their other option, right now, in the morning in a parking lot in a little city in a strange country? Get out and walk away? Wait for the police to grab them?

They are 200 miles from Vienna. The M5 to the M0 bypass around Budapest to the M1. Three hours and one minute if there's no traffic, and there won't be at this hour. Three hours and one minute until a new life.

They get in the truck.

August had been unusually warm in Hungary, but the heat finally broke ten days ago. In the early morning of August 26, the air outside is in the mid-60s. But inside the truck, in an insulated box when the doors are closed and all their bodies press together, the temperature immediately begins to rise.

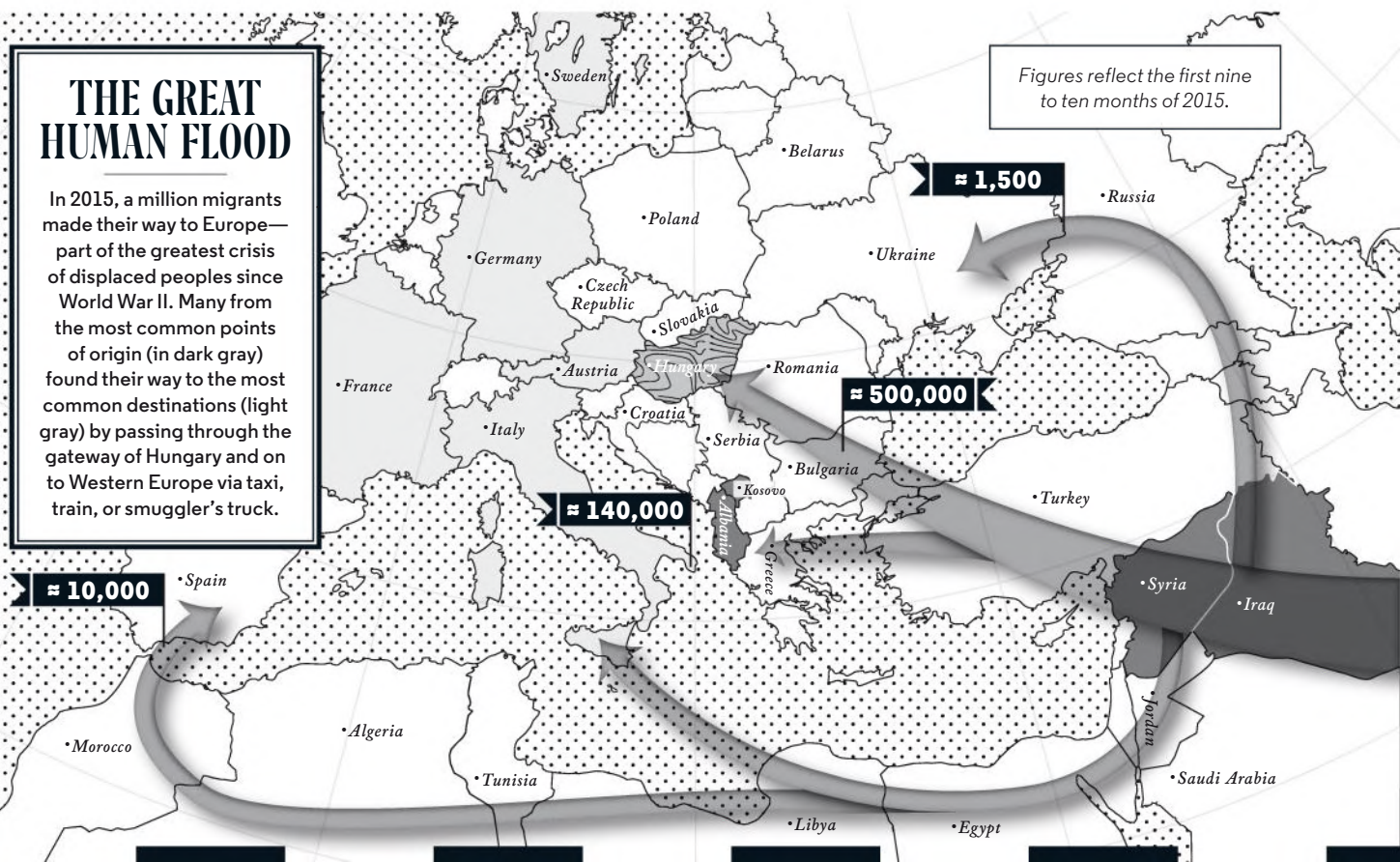
The refrigeration unit is broken, and it wouldn't matter if it worked, anyway. The box is airtight.

The truck turns onto the highway as the first glow of dawn blushes the eastern sky. Already it is hard to breathe.

THE GREAT HUMAN FLOOD

In 2015, a million migrants made their way to Europe—part of the greatest crisis of displaced peoples since World War II. Many from the most common points of origin (in dark gray) found their way to the most common destinations (light gray) by passing through the gateway of Hungary and on to Western Europe via taxi, train, or smuggler's truck.

Figures reflect the first nine to ten months of 2015.





In 2015, war zones in Syria, Afghanistan, and ISIS-occupied Iraq displaced hundreds of thousands to Europe. They traveled across land—by taxi, by train, by smuggler's truck (as the 71 in the story did)—and by sea, as did the refugees pictured here, who reached the Greek island of Lesbos in October.

THERE IS NO PLEASANT WAY, generally speaking, to migrate from a bad place to someplace you hope will be better. For one, it almost always is illegal: A perverse oddity of the modern world is that fleeing a war zone—Syria, Afghanistan, ISIS-occupied Iraq, for example—beyond a refugee camp involves breaking one or many sovereign laws. An Afghan shopkeeper cannot simply move to Copenhagen even if he has the financial means, just as a Syrian dentist cannot easily relocate her practice to Colorado. There are exceptions, a stingy few visas for the exceptionally skilled and lucky, scattered resettlement programs, asylum if one can get to a country that will grant it. But try to escape a kleptocratic authoritarian so you can feed your family and there's not even the option of a camp. There's nothing but roadblocks.

Because such journeys are illegal, they also require an unreasonable outlay of cash and an enormous assumption of risk—both of which tend to rise with how far you're going, how awful a place you left, and how treacherous the obstacles in between. A Syrian refugee escaping a civil war that's destroyed her country has to first get into and then across Turkey to the western coast. Then the Aegean Sea gets in the way. A safe and seaworthy ferry to Greece, as Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch has repeatedly pointed out, costs an EU citizen 20 euros, but the Syrian refugees last fall paid 1,400 U.S. dollars—about 66 times as much—to make the same crossing in an overloaded and flimsy dinghy, dozens of which putter away from the Turkish coast every day. Those boats, such as they are, also tend to capsize or sink: In the first ten months of 2015, more than 3,000 refugees drowned before they reached a Greek island.

The risk can be mitigated with even more money, of course. A refugee trying to take the most direct route out of Afghanistan, for instance, can buy a counterfeit passport respectable enough to get through most European airports for \$25,000. A visa into Turkey—rarely a final destination, but one avoids going overland through Iran—can be bought for \$5,000. An Afghan in Budapest named Ali told me his uncle, who lived in

a province currently being overrun by the Taliban, paid \$60,000 to get himself, his wife, and his three children to Europe. Ali told him it was too much and too dangerous. "At least I will be living," his uncle said. He signed away all his land, 15 fertile acres, to cover part of the cost. "The person who is middle-class," Ali told me, "who isn't armed, who doesn't want to kill people, he has only one choice. Leave."

Smugglers are almost always involved, either arranging the entire itinerary, like black-market travel agents, or freelancing individual segments. They are parasites, preying on human desperation, but they are also businessmen, professional in their own way. Their job is to move people from one point to another, and if they don't do that effectively—if they steal their clients' money or abandon them in a forest or suffocate them in the back of a truck—they will eventually lose their customer base. True, the people being smuggled have no legal recourse, but it's a referral-based industry. Word gets around.

In ordinary times, anyway. But more than a million people migrated into Europe last year, mostly refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan and almost all of them funneling up through Greece, Macedonia, or Bulgaria, and then Serbia, paths that converged on the Hungarian frontier. By late summer, most of them didn't need to be herded over the border by smugglers, as their enormous numbers—8,000 a day, give or take—made being surreptitious rather pointless. They could simply walk. For a while, many of them registered with the authorities and were detained in camps before being allowed to continue farther into Europe. But then the registration system was overwhelmed and the camps collapsed into overcrowded squalor, and Hungary tightened its border with Serbia before closing it completely. Yet still people kept coming. So many were trying to move all at once that the established smugglers couldn't keep pace.

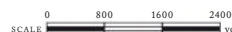
Supply quickly rose to meet demand. Taxi drivers staged themselves at a gas station just north of the Serbian border, charging €200 a head for a ride to Budapest, €300 all the way to Vienna if someone negotiated hard enough. Every palooka who'd

ever hauled bootleg vodka—Bulgarians, Romanians, Romas who usually worked the northern routes—started stuffing vans and trucks with people. None of them could be vetted through the migrant networks. None of them had reputations. They had vehicles. They had a secondhand chicken truck.

"The person who doesn't have a lot of money or who doesn't want to pay, he doesn't have a choice," said Attila Fekete, a Hungarian journalist who's covered the underworld for decades. "And if you don't want to pay for the brand name, you take your chances."

How hard could it be, anyway? Smuggling is smuggling, the thinking seemed to be. Drugs, guns, booze. "The item being transported," he said, "is just a question of packaging."

Except drugs and guns don't need air.



THE TRUCK WITH the chicken logo on the side is passing Hegyesalom, the last village before the border, at ten o'clock in the morning. It follows the M1 into Austria, where the highway becomes the A4. It rumbles and sputters a few miles farther, then pulls to the shoulder not far from a town called Parndorf.

The truck has been giving the drivers trouble all morning. At least they've made it to Austria. Most of the way. Far enough.

The drivers get out of the cab, wait for the lead car that was running ahead to watch for police and border checks to pick them up.

One of them goes to the back of the truck. The doors are locked, and have been since it left Kecskemét. There are no sounds coming from the cargo box, no muffled voices, no dull, thudding bangs on the walls. He opens the truck. He slams the door shut again, makes sure it is locked before he hops into the lead car. They drive away in a panic.

The truck sits in the sun on the pavement all day and all night and half of the next day, too.

A maintenance worker is mowing grass by the side of the road. It is about noon when he notices a damp spot on the cement beneath the rear of the truck. A fluid is dripping out. There is a stench.



In September, refugees from Afghanistan and Syria were gathered in Hungary for vetting by authorities. Others, in the Hungarian village of Zákány, were escorted by policemen to a train bound directly for Austria. By late October, Hungary's borders with Croatia and Serbia were fenced off entirely.

The grass mower calls the highway patrol. An officer arrives after midday, pulls behind the chicken truck. He opens the door to the cargo box, then twists away and vomits.

More police are summoned, then technicians in white jumpsuits, hoods pulled over their heads and masks stretched across their faces. They study the truck on the side of the road. It's hot, the temperature climbing to the mid-80s outside, and at least 15 degrees hotter in the back of the truck. The smell is horrific, acrid sweet. They guess at least 20 bodies are inside. No, more. They tell reporters that as many as 50 people are dead in the truck.

A wrecker arrives, winches up the truck, the bodies still inside. It goes east on the A4, back toward Hungary, to a cool and cavernous building in Nickelsdorf. Forensic examiners start to gently untangle the bodies that had begun to decompose in the heat. They will all be autopsied, but already it is assumed that they suffocated and that they did so somewhere in Hungary.

Counting the bodies is a tedious procedure, carefully lifting away one to find others beneath. The smallest, the children, one of them a girl not even a year old, are buried in the heap. By nightfall, the local police chief won't be able to say how many people died in the truck. That will have to wait until morning, when everyone has been removed and cataloged and carefully placed in 71 body bags.

0 800 1600 2400
SCALE yd.

MIGRANTS HAVE COME to Hungary for decades, a stutter-step march of people out of the Balkans and Africa and points beyond. Almost none of them have ever wanted to stay. Hungary just happens to be a geographically convenient route into more prosperous Western Europe, the last few hundred kilometers of highway or rail line before Austria and, beyond, Germany or Scandinavia.

Getting from one side of the country to the other was not especially difficult, relatively speaking. Because Hungary is part of the Schengen area, 26 European nations that have eliminated passport controls, anyone who made it into Hungary with enough money for a train ticket or a taxi or a

smuggler's van generally could continue west and north without too much risk. Some of them were stopped, of course, but since they all were trying to leave, they were of no particular concern to the locals. By one estimate, for example, as many as 50,000 people from Kosovo slipped through the country between November 2014 and February 2015, largely unnoticed. "The only thing they were interested in," says Marta Pardavi, the co-chair of the Helsinki Committee in Budapest, "was how fast they could get to Germany."

Where people have migrated from has shifted with calamities and economies. Before the Kosovars, there were Turks and Kurds, and before them were Serbians, Moldovans, and Romanians. The Syrians, and the Iraqis and Afghans, too, started coming at the beginning of 2015. They were not unexpected.

The Syrian civil war began in 2011, and within three years, almost 3 million refugees had fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. Iraqis who years ago, during the last war, had fled to Syria were displaced again. Parts of Iraq were overrun by ISIS. Afghanistan disintegrated again as well. By 2014, having already spilled into Bulgaria and Italy, refugees from the region began trickling into, and mostly through, Hungary.

In the first seven months of 2014, the authorities identified 3,025 Syrians, 4,068 Afghans, and 127 Iraqis illegally entering the country. Those were modest numbers, but they touched off what András Kováts, the director of Menedék (it means "refuge"), the Hungarian Association for Migrants, calls chain migration: As more people make it to Western Europe—by train, by foot, by smuggler's truck—the easier it is for others to follow, both because they have better information on how to get there and because family and friends are waiting to help them get settled. So that trickle began to grow exponentially, into a stream in the spring of 2015, a river by midsummer, a deluge in the August heat. That month, 52,750 people, mostly Syrians and Afghans, illegally crossed the border from Serbia. Africans, from Eritrea and other countries, slipped in, too, taking advantage of the numbers and the lack of security in Libya.

It was apparent for years, in other words, that hundreds of thousands of displaced people eventually would begin moving toward Europe, that a mass migration would need to be managed and a humanitarian crisis mitigated, that great numbers of people would come whether they technically were allowed to or not, and that they would need food and shelter and proper vetting. None of this was a surprise. It was entirely predictable—in fact, *was predicted*—that an enormous wave of human desperation and misery was rolling toward Europe, that it would wash ashore in Greece and then continue northward. There was ample time to prepare, either to ameliorate or to exploit.

The politicians currently governing Hungary chose the latter. For them, refugees were a political opportunity. They prepared by laying coils of razor wire at the base of a chain-link fence.

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PEOPLE DO NOT stuff themselves into the back of an airless truck unless it is the least worst of many bad options. If it is imperative, for whatever reason, to get from one place to another, and if a person can't do so safely and legally, then he will take risks that otherwise would be unthinkable.

And if a country enacts new laws and enforces old ones more vigorously and erects more imposing obstacles—even *when it knows it cannot possibly prevent anyone trying to migrate*—the journey will only be made less safe and the risks more extreme. But that's precisely what Hungary did.

In October 2014, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party tanked after it proposed taxing Internet usage; the party lost a million supporters, almost half of those who'd voted for Fidesz six months earlier. It needed an issue to reclaim its base, which, given Hungary's conservative politics—Fidesz's only credible competition is from the ultra-nationalist Jobbik party—would have to be a right-wing cause. Conveniently, there happened to be at the time a spike in the number of Kosovars and ethnic Albanians migrating into Europe. On February 2, 2015, after thousands of



At the station in Zákány, *left*, refugees struggled to board the train to Austria. In Budapest, *right*, refugees gathered at the Keleti station. Right-wing Hungarian politicians had begun to oppose the migration rhetorically while trainloads of refugees were delivered into Europe every day.

Kosovars in the previous months had passed through without concern, police boarded a train to Munich in the western Hungarian town of Tatabánya and removed 50 migrants. At the next stop, in Győr, they pulled 250 more from the train.

"That was the first time," says András Pulai, the director of the polling firm Publicus, "that anyone knew it was an issue."

It was also the foundation of a new narrative that cast Hungary—or, rather, Fidesz—as protecting its people from a phantom menace of swarming migrants. In May, when the number of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan had ticked up, the government mailed a "national consultation" on immigration to every household, a dozen questions that were the written equivalent of a push poll.

"In Paris the lives of innocent people were extinguished, in cold blood and with terrifying brutality," Orbán wrote in the introduction, referencing the *Charlie Hebdo* attack. (The more deadly Paris attacks were still six months in the future.) "This incomprehensible act of horror also demonstrated that Brussels and the European Union are unable to adequately deal with the issue of immigration."

The questions were equally subtle:

"There are some who think that mismanagement of the immigration question by Brussels may have something to do with increased terrorism. Do you agree with this view?"

"We hear different views on the issue of immigration. There are some who think that economic migrants jeopardize the jobs and livelihoods of Hungarians. Do you agree?"

"Would you support the Hungarian government in the introduction of more stringent immigration regulations, in contrast to Brussels' lenient policy?"

A month later, in June, the government announced it would build the fence along the border with Serbia. The government also spent a quarter-million dollars erecting billboards with messages such as **IF YOU COME TO HUNGARY, DON'T TAKE THE JOBS OF HUNGARIANS!** and **IF YOU COME TO HUNGARY, YOU MUST FOLLOW OUR LAWS!** If those weren't clear enough, there was one with a smiling young blonde in a

low-cut tank top: **WE DO NOT WANT ILLEGAL MIGRANTS!**

All of those signs were in Hungarian, a linguistic orphan unrelated to any other common language and indecipherable to anyone—like, say, almost every migrant—who doesn't speak it.

"This was just a political play for their own voters," Pulai says.

The stagecraft seemed to intensify with the crisis. By the end of summer, for instance, about 1,500 migrants a day had been moving through the Keleti train station in Budapest, a grand nineteenth-century building with 13 tracks, the city's main international train terminal. People might have stayed for a night, maybe two, but soon enough they were able to buy tickets and board passenger cars and roll out of Hungary.

But in late August, delays at the station started growing. Ticket lines for migrants were interminably long. People paid for seats on trains they then weren't allowed to board. Fifteen hundred migrants was now a problematic volume. And then, on September 1, the government closed the station, the effect of which was to corral thousands of people into a big, visible building.

Officially, the government was merely fulfilling its obligation to the European continent. "The Hungarian police," Prime Minister Orbán's office announced, "are maintaining order within clearly defined statutory boundaries in relation to the thousands of migrants who have entered the EU illegally..." The statement did not explain why maintaining such order hadn't been necessary all summer as migrants had moved through Keleti. But Orbán, in a radio interview on September 4, gave a hint. "We may one morning wake up," he said, "and realize that we are in the minority on our own continent."

That is a fine and scary sound bite, but it is also not remotely plausible. There are more than a half-billion people in Europe. The continent can easily absorb a million newcomers and, considering its aging population and declining workforce, probably should. Hungary, meanwhile, isn't absorbing anyone. It's fiercely homogeneous, officially hostile to outsiders, and, by European

standards, poor; even manual labor pays three times as much in Austria, one country to the west. Immigration, illegal and otherwise, simply has never been a concern.

But such xenophobic cant has to be understood in the context of domestic politics, not international policy. For the cynical, great masses of traveling foreigners make excellent political props, especially if they come from lands of suicide bombers and medieval barbarians and lunatic theocrats. That those props are real people, and that they are escaping those places, is irrelevant. Not coincidentally, penning thousands of people in a train station in the heart of Budapest presented an exquisite visual for anyone claiming to be standing firm against Muslim hordes invading, as Orbán put it, "Christian Europe." So, too, did a small riot along the Serbian border fence that was either quelled—the official Hungarian version—or provoked.

"This was all meant for the public," says András Kováts at Menedék. "See how strong we are, protecting Europe. We are the defenders of the prosperous West. This is our sacrifice, and this is our greatness."

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THE CHICKEN TRUCK has a temporary Hungarian license tag, which can be traced to the man who registered it, who almost certainly is no one of any authority or particular consequence, just a guy who pocketed a few euros for the favor of picking up a plate. But it is easy to track, and thus it is easy to locate at least one person involved with a truck that smothered 71 people.

Hungarian police raid 20 homes in the late hours of August 27 and the early ones of the next day. They soon arrest five men, four Bulgarians and an Afghan, all of whom are suspected of being involved in the deaths of 71 migrants packed into the chicken truck. How exactly each might be involved—whether one drove the truck or loaded the truck or procured the temporary license plate for the truck—is not explained. (A sixth man is arrested in Bulgaria and later released.)

A month later, none have been charged with a crime. *(continued on next page)*



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Gábor Schmidt, a prosecutor in Kecskemét, the Hungarian city where the chicken truck was registered, explains that they are being held in pre-trial detention while being investigated for qualified human smuggling, “qualified” being the Hungarian equivalent of the American “aggravated.” (One of the qualifiers is that people are dead, and another is that they suffered terribly while being smothered dead. The third is that the smuggling was done by an OCG, an organized criminal group, albeit a sloppy and reckless one.)

Schmidt tells me their ages—the Afghan is 28, and the Bulgarians are 50, 37, 29, and 24—but he will not tell me their names. He will not tell me how they were identified or if they have criminal records. He will not tell me if the truck had been used to smuggle other people before August 26, and he will not tell me innocuous details, such as the dimensions of the cargo container.

Mostly, Schmidt has statistics about illegal border crossings and human-smuggling cases, both of which have increased dramatically in 2015. It is too soon to tell if the fence will have any effect. “But in recent times, there have been far more human-smuggling cases, transporting far more people under bad circumstances,” he says. “Someone who gets his fortune, who makes his profit, from the abuse of migrants who flee terrible circumstances is a danger to society. As you can see, putting 71 people in such a lorry...”

He tells me about another case, 40 migrants in the back of a truck that rolled over on the M5 near Kecskemét at two o’clock in the morning on August 28—the day after the chicken truck was found. They all survived, but seven ended up in the hospital. The driver, a Romanian man, 30 years old, was paid a €50 deposit and would have collected €150 more if he’d gotten where he was going. He was arrested, charged, tried, and convicted in 28 days, sentenced on September 25 to 18 months in prison and three years’ banishment from Hungary.

So the cases can be tried quickly. But Schmidt says he does not know when the five men who allegedly killed 71 migrants in the chicken truck will even be formally charged, only that they can be held for up to three years regardless. He will not tell me why the investigation is taking so long. He is very gracious about not telling me much of anything, really. Privacy laws and such.

ONE SATURDAY AFTERNOON in early October, no different from the Friday before or the Sunday after, a long, thick line of refugees trudged along a wide path worn into a green Croatian field. The path ended at a low

embankment at the edge of an old Hungarian man’s tree farm in the tiny village of Zákány.

The berm marked the border between the two countries. Silver-white beams poked up from the dirt, the posts of another fence Hungary was building. Razor wire tumbled in a double row on the ground, except for a gap about 12 feet wide where eight Hungarian policemen in red berets were posted. More were spread in a loose corridor through the trampled parts of the tree farm, on the other side of which was a rundown train station and, on the tracks, a rundown train.

The police stopped each group while an interpreter shouted out the rules. Walk, or you can’t come in. Form two lines, side by side, or you can’t come in. Go directly to the train. Do not get off the train.

I watched as they were allowed over the embankment roughly a hundred at a time. The first groups were composed mostly of young men, as are about two-thirds of all the migrants traveling into Europe, young men typically being stronger and healthier and better able to make the pioneering trip. Families—little kids, old women, fathers and mothers—came through in the later groups. On the far side of the tree farm, they turned parallel to the tracks. Soldiers with automatic weapons slung across their backs lined the edge of the field to keep anyone from darting into the saplings, though no one showed the least inclination to do so. Police officers in blue uniforms, some with surgical masks, guided the migrants toward the train cars on the track, moving a wooden pallet from car to car as a makeshift boarding platform.

Twelve hundred people boarded that one train. Roughly as many boarded one earlier and another later, and the trains kept coming. Publicly, and with great bombast, Hungary had built a mighty fence to hold back the Muslim hordes. But all the fence had done was divert refugees into Croatia, which then delivered them to a lonely border town. Quietly, then, Hungary was shepherding thousands upon thousands of people into Europe every day, without so much as asking their names. It was unclear how that contributed to European security.

On the other hand, it was a more humane policy, though only marginally. There was no food. There were toilets, but they emptied directly onto the tracks, and no one was allowed to use them until the train started moving. No one was allowed to pee outside the train, either, and there was nowhere to do so, anyway.

The train was provided by the Hungarian government, and when it was fully loaded, it backed up into a switchyard, where nine civilians were waiting with water and food. They worked around the clock in volunteer shifts, because the migrants and refugees came at all hours. Under temporary canopies, they filled bags with three pieces of bread, two pieces of cheese, one banana, and a candy bar or a cookie. They had 20 minutes to distribute everything, passing bottles and bags through the windows of the train cars, which they managed with practiced efficiency.

Hegyeshalom, the Hungarian village the refugees were going to on the Austrian border, was four hours away. (The train is very

slow.) Other civilians usually were waiting there, including, often, Márton Bisztrai, who organized one of the volunteer groups. Bisztrai and his colleagues also had food and water and blankets, and they directed people from the train depot to the Austrian border two kilometers on. Usually, Bisztrai drove a van from the border to the back of the procession to pick up the stragglers, old women and people in wheelchairs and families with small children. They didn’t always want to get in. They’d heard about the chicken truck. Word gets around.

He did his best to soothe them, explained that the van had room and air and that the border was only five minutes away. But he understood. “I really believe,” he told me in early October, “that those 71 people were forced into that truck by the laws Hungary has put in place.”

“There are more and more people who want to be smuggled,” Austrian prosecutor Roland Koch said. “And the smugglers get more and more greedy, and they take more and more risks.”

But it no longer was only Hungary impeding the migration. A week later, Hungary finished the fence along the Croatian border, all 216 miles, and closed the gap at Zákány. People were shunted across the length of Croatia and through tiny Slovenia into Austria. But there were so many of them that Croatia threatened to close its borders, and Slovenia protested that it was overwhelmed, and in late October, Austria announced that it was tightening its border controls, too. And that was before the Paris attacks in November, which provoked a Europe-wide backlash, the greatest threat yet to the refugees.

EU ministers met to come up with a plan, and they failed, and people still came. It was akin to stacking rocks to hold back a river: The stream will not stop but rather finds gaps and cracks, splashing through more chaotically and unpredictably.

THERE WAS YET ANOTHER truck abandoned on the highway just over the border in Austria the same day the chicken truck was found. It was near Parndorf, and there were 81 people inside—alive, but only because they’d pried open the door of their semi-trailer with a crowbar. In the big trucks, even the ones that don’t have airtight broken-down refrigerated units, it’s hard to breathe when people are packed in too tightly.

Roland Koch, a prosecutor in Eisenstadt, Austria, had seen people in worse shape, 20 people, sometimes 50, stuffed into a truck and half-suffocated by the time the police got to them. “Very bad shape,” he told me in early October. “Very bad.”

During the fall, people were still being smuggled into Austria more often in vans, at least the ones the police and prosecutors

found. But larger trucks were becoming more common, and that was just a matter of basic economics.

"There are more and more people who want to be smuggled," Koch said. "And the smugglers get more and more greedy, and they take more and more risks."

The men who drove the chicken truck were greedy, but it is unclear if they were taking a risk or if they were just stupid, if they didn't know a refrigerated truck was airtight or if they thought it wouldn't matter. Koch said he did not know, because none of the Austrian investigators had spoken to any of the men in Hungarian custody. Not that it mattered, because Koch wouldn't tell me, anyway. Koch, like Gábor Schmidt in Hungary, is friendly and gracious in telling me almost nothing about how 71 people ended up dead.

It is impossible to say precisely what happened to the chicken truck on the highway between Kecskemét and Parndorf. The mechanics might be clarified someday, the minor narrative details of who drove and what broke and how much people paid to stand in the back. But there will always be a dreary confusion about it, because everyone who matters can't explain. They're all dead.

Their families don't know. Reporters for *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* found some of them, mostly through social-networking sites in Iraq and Turkey—the names of the victims had not been released by late November—but none of the relatives even knew about the truck until after the fact. Most of them insisted their son or brother or cousin would never willingly climb into an airless cargo container. But no one knows that, not unless he's there, not unless it's his choice, right then, in the morning dark in a little city in a strange country.

"They would get in anyway," a man in a café in Budapest tells me. "There is no other option. They just see a truck that someone says will take them."

The man is not a smuggler, technically, but he works with smugglers and has for years. The organized operations have always been there, running recruiters out of Internet cafés and kebab shops, shuffling vehicles among dummy corporations.

But the enormous influx of migrants whipsawed the economics, the demand driving up fees, drawing a surplus of amateurs into the supply, then crashing the prices. For a brief while, a car ride from the border to Budapest, the man says, could be negotiated down to €70 a head.

Then the borders were fenced off—Serbia on September 15, Croatia a month later. The Paris attacks in November threatened to bring even more border restrictions and closings. But thousands of people were still trying to get to Western Europe. Making it harder only made it more expensive, and making it more expensive makes it more profitable. "You can't stop it," the man says. "The government is helping the smugglers with the border controls."

More people will get into more trucks. He is certain of that. Most of them will get where they're going. But some of them, a few of them, will die. "*Járulékos veszteség*," he says. "A loss, but understandable." ❧

SEAN FLYNN is a GQ correspondent.

OSCAR ISAAC



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loyal." (When it's pointed out that this description sounds an awful lot like Han Solo, Abrams is coy: "I would like to think there's room for more than one rogue in *Star Wars*.")

In Paris, the two met at the famous Café de Flore, where Abrams patiently sipped a coffee while Isaac read scenes from the movie on Abrams's iPhone. Then they talked into the night about the story and what the role might become.

"J.J. basically told me it was an intense, heroic, dramatic character and he hadn't seen me do that," Isaac says. Nevertheless, he hesitated. "I didn't know if I could make it interesting," he says. "I didn't know why me and not anybody else." Only after flying home and thinking it over for a few days did he decide to take the plunge.

Abrams was delighted. "Oscar is a far more sophisticated actor than one might get for a role that could be looked at as just a daring, kick-ass pilot," he says. "But I needed a great actor—not just a great-looking guy who also acts."

• • •

SOME TIME AGO, Isaac sat down to perform a kind of exercise. "Just out of curiosity, I thought, 'What common thread do the three last characters I played have?'" he says. "And yes, what they did have in common was a sense of melancholy, anger, displacement."

Isaac's family moved to the United States from Guatemala when he was 5 months old. Back then his full name was Oscar Isaac Hernandez Estrada. The family went first to Baltimore and then to New Orleans, where

"It became a badge of individuality," Isaac says. "I was the guy that didn't drink, and it just felt good to be that."

his father, Oscar Gonzalo, studied to become a doctor. Finally they settled in Miami. Isaac and his siblings often accompanied their mother on trips home to Guatemala, and she spoke primarily Spanish around the house, but it was still a largely Americanized upbringing.

"For my father, individualism was very important, and he instilled that in me," Isaac says. "It was way more important to recognize myself as an individual than as part of a group. I wasn't part of the 'Latino community.' I was just a kid in high school with friends, who was into playing music." He listened to the Beatles and the Cure. He played in a hard-core band and a ska-punk band called the

Blinking Underdogs, writing songs about Boynton Beach trailer parks instead of London ghettos. Even within that community, he kept himself apart—going straight edge while most around him indulged in drugs and alcohol. "It became a badge of individuality," he says. "I was the guy that didn't drink, and it just felt good to be that." Early on, he began using his truncated and more Anglicized name, in part as a way to distinguish himself from the multitude of other Oscar Hernandezes in Miami. On the other hand, when he was 10 and his parents became American citizens and asked if he wanted to join them, he declined, not becoming a citizen until 2006.

There have been times when his ethnicity has pushed its way unavoidably into the foreground. At Juilliard, for instance, one teacher pulled him aside to say, "There's a real sandiness to your voice. Is that from growing up singing flamenco?" Other manifestations at the school were subtler: All students were expected to learn the upper-crust mid-Atlantic accent Americans have long used to denote quasi-Britishness when performing Shakespeare, Chekhov, and the like.

"They call it 'Standard English,' the implication being that if you speak something else, you're substandard," Isaac says. "Some minority students might take that as 'You're trying to make me speak white.' But I was able to think of it not as 'I'm going to change the way I speak' but 'I'll be able to speak this way as well.'"

"I never thought of myself as an *ethnic* actor," he adds. "I don't feel comfortable saying I speak for Guatemalans. Or for Latin men. Or for Latin men that are five nine..."

Growing up, there had been an even more powerful social force vying for his allegiance: religion. Soon after arriving in the U.S., Oscar Gonzalo had undergone a conversion to evangelical Christianity that swept up the entire family. "My dad was a man of extremes. And the way my mom was raised, she followed her husband," Isaac says. "So if God spoke to my father one day and said we were not supposed to have a TV in the house, it was suddenly gone." The Hernandez home became the site of a kind of ongoing tent revival. Visiting pastors would come and stay with the family, play Legos with the children, and then hold services in the living room, where participants would often be so seized by the Spirit that they would faint and speak in tongues.

"I was never frightened by it," Isaac says. "I was more curious why I wasn't feeling the real thing myself." At one revival, he watched as a pastor prayed over and then laid hands on a line of congregants, each of whom collapsed, overcome. When it came time for his turn, Isaac found himself unmoved by the pastor's touch. Puzzled, he went to the back of the line and waited to try again. This time, he duly fainted. "But I knew I faked it," he says. "I knew it. I was like, 'Oh, you phony.'"

It wasn't long before Isaac broke away from the Church; a "slow amputation" is how he describes it. Still, the evangelical experience informs his current job in unexpected ways. What is acting, after all, if not a kind of speaking in tongues? The goal of acting is the abandonment of self, a surrender to the moment and to an outside spirit not totally unlike religious ecstasy. And who leads the adherent to that place? A kind of shaman, of course: "A director is always thinking, 'What is the right

combination of words that I can say that will unlock the right response in you?" Isaac says. "If I can say the right thing, it will unlock this thing in you, but if I say it wrong, the opposite will happen." Religion is a very similar thing. Like, somebody was meditating long enough that they put the right sentence together and thought, 'If you say these words in exactly this way, you'll know how to live, but you have to say it exactly like this.' The problem is that it's not always the same for everybody."

And certainly his journey to acting has the quality of a calling. "I remember yelling at myself for scavenging my own life. I was having an argument with an ex-girlfriend of mine, and I was crying and she was crying, and there was a part of me that was recording it. I was like, 'Are you a psychopath, that you're able to be in this and also watching it and taking notes? That's psychopathic behavior,'" he says. "And then I remember walking back and forth in the grass outside her house thinking, 'You have to accept that it's not an accident that you've dedicated your life to getting better at this thing. The people who do that can't help it. And that's why they become writers and actors and painters. Because they can't help but comment on existence.'"

Is that just an elaborate defense for being an asshole?

"See, I don't think that necessarily makes you an asshole. That's what I had to figure out. It might make you an asshole if you used it to make millions of dollars...."

Um...as it happens...

Isaac smiles. "Yeah, okay," he says, taking a sheepish sip of wine. "But that was *secondary*."

IT'S BECOME all but an item of bedrock faith that an actor like Isaac—serious, grown-up, interested in complicated, nuanced characters—will find suitable work these days not on the big screen but on television. Indeed, Isaac made his debut as a TV leading man under one of that medium's most vaunted auteurs, *The Wire* creator David Simon. In HBO's *Show Me a Hero*, Isaac played Nick Wasicsko, the real-life mayor of Yonkers, who struggled to navigate the racial politics surrounding court-mandated low-income housing in the 1980s. But while he enjoyed making the miniseries, Isaac was left wary of TV's putative golden age. For someone accustomed to the relatively leisurely pace of a feature film, the shoot felt frantic.

"I remember being in a van, memorizing huge chunks of very dense political dialogue because things had shifted around and we lost a location or it was going to rain. We shot a six-hour movie in three months; right now I'm shooting a two-hour movie in four," he says. "It's a lot to ask of an entire crew. I feel like the quality control is so precarious. There always comes a moment when you're

like, 'Ah, the art department didn't have time to fix that.' There's something about the two-hour format—and it doesn't always happen; there are a lot of shitty movies—but when it works, it allows for things to be much more exact on all levels."

This attitude is perhaps understandable when you look at the movie roles with which he's been blessed. *Llewelyn Davis*, in particular, was almost a stroke of divine luck. The Coens were in search of an actor who, in addition to inhabiting their irritable hero, could credibly sing and play guitar; Isaac heard about the casting call and leapt. The part catapulted him from bit roles (like an especially chilling turn in *Drive*) to a film in which he appeared in nearly every precisely Coen-composed shot. "It was euphoric," he says. "But there were also some fucked-up moments when I would sabotage myself."

In particular, there came a day when Isaac was scheduled to shoot a series of exteriors, mostly Llewelyn entering and exiting doors and subway stations, bundled against the cold and holding his companion and avatar, a ginger cat named Ulysses. For his birthday, a few days earlier, Isaac had been given a bottle of Basil Hayden's bourbon. He started sipping early. "We were shooting in the Village, and the guy who had been teaching me guitar lived over the old Gaslight Cafe. So at lunch I went over there, had a little smoke, feeling good..." So the day went, until it came time to go back to the set and work. "I look at the bottle and I'm like, 'Yeesh. I drank the whole thing!'" he recalls. "Remember, I'm not a huge drinker. I didn't drink until I was 25 years old." The scene that evening was a short one in which Llewelyn is thrown out of the Gaslight and up against a car. "We did the first take, and that's the last thing I remember," he says. "I have flashes of people putting clothes on me, and then I'm waking up in my bed, all my clothes on."

Not long after he woke, he says, the phone rang. It was Joel Coen.

"Hey, man," said Isaac tentatively.

"Hey," said Coen. "So...I'm 100 percent sure it would have been better if you hadn't been sloshed when we shot that."

"Oh man, I had no idea how much I had to drink," Isaac told him. Coen started laughing.

"They were afraid that maybe that was my process," Isaac says. "Like maybe any drunk scene, I had to get super drunk. It just shows their generosity [to actors]. He was so rational. He said, 'It was just imperfect the way the weather is sometimes imperfect. It just wasn't quite right.'"

In retrospect, Isaac sees the incident as part of becoming a leading man. "I think there was a part of me that was reacting to all the pressure. Like, 'What if I get it wrong? What if I fuck up? What's the worst that can happen?'" he says. "You fuck up. Ironically, that's what the movie was about: getting to the point where you're willing to humiliate yourself to find some sort of truth, some sort of moment of honesty. In order to do something bold, you have to get it wrong. Otherwise, all you see is safe, boring stuff."

WE KNOW LITTLE about Poe Dameron, of course, except that he has a name straight out of a *Star Wars* name generator. The entirety of

what we know about Dameron's "Personality and Traits," according to the definitive Wookieepedia website, is the following:

Poe Dameron was a human male. He had brown hair, brown eyes, and fair skin. Dameron was known for his strong commitment to the Resistance and his duty, but had trouble with the line between that commitment and the commitment to his comrades.

Not a lot on which an actor invested in complex psychology can hang his helmet. Isaac insists the job should be the same no matter how big or un-nuanced the proceedings may be: "It's acting. You have to commit to imaginary circumstances. You have to put yourself in an emotional state in these circumstances. Sometimes you're asked to work in primary colors as opposed to your whole palette, but there's nothing simple about simplicity. It's different than being simplistic."

That may be the company line, but it doesn't mean that sticking to it can't be a struggle. Before choosing a role, he says, he needs to find something to love about it. So what did he find to love about *Star Wars*?

There is a pause. "It was hard," he says finally. "I actually felt the most green and insecure that I had in a long time. I was like, *What am I doing here?* There was not a lot of room to shade in the character. Every time I tried to do that, it would slow things down too much. J.J. would be like, 'Get on with it, man!' Just, *Louder! Faster!* And then I would feel like I was doing that all the time. It felt weird and like I was not being creative. I would get nervous I wasn't finding enough or I was missing an opportunity."

"It's the actors who come in, do the job, and *don't* wrestle with those questions that do just fine but don't excel," says Abrams. "Oscar's concerns about making the character feel alive and authentic is the exact reason he's a great actor. This is a hero that you need to believe is also a human being. And he gave the role a nuance that I think made it one of the strongest in the movie."

Still, does the prospect of two more *Star Wars* movies cause Isaac despair? The actor brightens. "No! Because what's so fun about it is...it's all made-up! It's all fucking made-up, but in a great way. We get to create it as we go." This may be unsettling for those committed to the idea of *Star Wars* as a realm of biblical certitude. But sometimes a blank slate is the most creative canvas of all. In an early interview for *The Force Awakens*, Isaac noted that the medal ceremony at the end of the original *Star Wars* had taken place on the moon Yavin 4. Coincidentally, exteriors on the moon had been shot in Guatemala. What if, he speculated, Poe was from Yavin 4? And what if he was in the audience as a child that day, dreaming of being just like Han Solo and Luke Skywalker when he grew up?

Lo and behold, Isaac recently learned that his idea, a product of serendipity and idle musing, had become part of the canon. A new comic book, *Shattered Empire*, documents the Dameron family settling on Yavin 4.

So he's not only in the Bible now... "I helped write the Bible," Isaac says, grinning as wide as any saved soul. "I'm a prophet!"

BRETT MARTIN is a GQ correspondent.

Isaac's evangelical experience informs his current job in unexpected ways. What is acting, after all, if not a kind of speaking in tongues?



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As Detective Paglia had said, “He came across as a hard-ass guy. I mean, you didn’t look at him and think ‘little old man.’”

Right off, Wally let me know he didn’t want me telling a sob story. He said he came from decent, hardworking people—his father drove for a dry cleaner, his mother worked in an office, and his brother and sister had turned out just fine—“so it’s all on me.” He was always wild, always ran with the bad kids: “We were like magnets to each other.” Most of all, he loved to fight. He was scrapping it up in the schoolyard when he was knee-high; and when he got a little older, he took up boxing and jujitsu.

For most of his criminal career, he worked as a collector for the Mob. The crew he hung with liked to see him in action, so they’d start a beef with somebody just to watch Wally fight. “I never felt afraid. I don’t know, I just don’t get afraid. It just doesn’t register like that.”

He was most comfortable with “violent guys,” he told me. They share the same sense of humor; the stuff they find funny, no one else does: “You’d be surprised with the serious criminals when they’re around each other. There’s a bond there.” Inside prison, he was respected—for his long criminal history, yes, but mostly for his demeanor, his old-school code. There in Chicago, the young gangbangers called him O.G., and they were always grabbing a chair for him or trying to assist him up the stairs, though he brushed off their help.

If he didn’t want me telling a sob story, he also didn’t want to be seen as just a criminal. “I read a lot,” he said. “I read just about nothing but fiction, because I’m a dreamer, okay? A lot of people would never believe that about me, but I’m a marshmallow. I really am, I swear! I’m a stone-ass marshmallow inside.”

At Petersburg, his days took on a kind of rhythm built around mealtimes; breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the chow hall, as regular as clockwork. He checked out books from the library—Lee Child and Tom Clancy—and read in the mornings. In the afternoons, he (slowly) walked the yard with a new friend, a lawyer from Georgia whom Wally nicknamed Humpty Dumpty after he fell off a stool one day. As Wally got settled in, he had doctors’ appointments for his bad knees and his cataracts. Ironically, he’d started having panic attacks in his old age, and the prison does put him on anti-anxiety medication. He still wasn’t afraid of anything he could put his hands on, but this panic came from nowhere; it was like a mad dog leaping out of the fog, a mad, invisible dog.

When our conversation wandered into emotional territory, Wally would sometimes laugh roughly and tell me, “Nah, nah, nah, I’m not gonna give you any of that marshmallow stuff

today.” Describing something hurtful, he’d say, “I kind of felt a ping.” Pings were smaller, crushable cousins of pangs. Locked up inside for years, what can a pang do for you but eat at your insides?

Eventually he was moved into a cell with three other inmates, not exactly his dream life. “I’m not happy, but I’m not supposed to be in prison and be happy,” he said. When I mentioned the tiny cell in the Niles police station and how he’d clung to it, he seemed confused, like he couldn’t remember it. There was silence and then a stuttering reply: “No...no...don’t want to lose no cell, no.”

And buried within the FBI report, there was another curious fact: “Unbehaun tried to count the money he stole from the bank, but he kept getting confused and lost track of the amount.”

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WHEN WALLY’S ATTORNEY, Richard McLeese, first met his client, on the day after he was arrested in February of 2013, Wally did not come across as the self-assured tough guy the cops had interviewed. Instead he struck McLeese as a baffled, exhausted old man with unmistakable desperation in his eyes. Wally pleaded guilty to the robbery, and his sentencing hearing was held a year later, in April 2014. It was at that hearing that a completely different narrative would unfold. Wally’s case, McLeese said, was “without a doubt one of the saddest and most disturbing cases that I’ve handled in over 30 years of doing this work.”

Wally was unlike every other client he had ever represented, McLeese told the court, all of whom desperately wanted to avoid prison. “It was almost as if I were a doctor and encountered a patient who, unable to live an ordinary life anymore because of whatever was pressing on him or her, decided what they really wanted to do was be bedridden for the rest of their lives—to try to figure out a way to give themselves a stroke.” To McLeese, Wally was using the criminal-justice system to commit suicide, in slow motion. As disturbing as that was, McLeese continued, there was something more: There were good reasons to believe that Wally’s fate could have been avoided.

In 1992, Wally began what would be the longest stretch of freedom since he was first locked up at the age of 23. He was 52 years old and newly hatched from the pen after a ten-year stint. For the next six years, Wally lived a peaceful, law-abiding existence. He started his own business, refinishing bathroom and kitchen fixtures. He had several back surgeries. He was at a time in life when many criminals “age out” of their violent behavior.

Then, in January of 1998, Wally held up a bank in Morton Grove, not far from the BMO branch in Niles. He was arrested within 15 minutes of the robbery and could give no explanation—to the cops, to his lawyer, to the judge—for committing the crime. It was puzzling enough that the judge ordered a mental-competency examination. Wally was transferred to the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minnesota, and it was there that he was found to be suffering from mild to moderate dementia.

From his medical report: “Mr. Unbehaun reported he has experienced difficulties with confusion, disorientation, and memory for many years, with a marked increase in these

difficulties within the last two years.” The doctors suspected he suffered from early onset of Alzheimer’s but could only definitively diagnose him with general dementia.

He was found to be competent to stand trial, however (the bar for that is exceedingly low), and was sentenced to 15 and a half years for the bank robbery. He did his time, and in August 2011 he was once again set free. Despite his diagnosis, he was not ordered to get medical or mental-health treatment as part of his parole. So he was let back out into the world suffering from a progressive cognitive disease that slowly but surely turns off the cells in your brain, untethering you from the world as you once knew it.

Wally found a room in an SRO apartment building a few blocks from Lake Michigan. He was lost, but not as lost as he was going to be. “You don’t know nothing—I mean, everything has changed on you,” he told me. Still, he settled into his new digs, buying some art supplies, a small air conditioner, an even smaller TV. Then, in January, Wally’s sister persuaded him to move down to South Carolina; she and her husband had rented a trailer for him in a rural area outside Rock Hill.

Though he’d been housed in prisons all over the United States, Wally had never lived outside Chicago and its northern suburbs. Now he found himself in “hillbilly heaven,” as he put it, tucked up in a small trailer park, five neighbors in all. He had no car, and both of his hips were degenerating, so he was confined to the trailer six days a week. On

Eventually Walter was moved into a cell with three other inmates, **not exactly his dream life**. “I’m not happy, but I’m not supposed to be in prison and be happy,” he said.

Wednesdays his sister came to take him food shopping. He’d buy his groceries at Walmart and pay for them with his Social Security check, and he and his sister would go to lunch at places he’d never heard of: Olive Garden, Sonic. Then she’d drop him off. That was his sole social contact for the week. He told his probation officer he was living like a hermit and compared it to being “in the hole”—solitary confinement.

“Nobody knows me there, not even my sister, because I’d only seen her maybe once every seven, eight, maybe ten years.” Wally said no one in her family wanted her to move him down there. “It kind of hurt, because people around me are kind of standoffish...because of my life pattern. I’ll put it that way, okay?”

His sister wanted to help, but she was pretty straitlaced and tended to lecture Wally about his swearing and drinking. He hated depending on her. It made him feel less of a man. He had one hip replaced and recovered in the trailer.

In early February, Wally rented the gray Infiniti and, without a word to his sister, packed his bags and headed north—back home to Chicago with the plan to visit an old girlfriend, in hopes that they could pick up

where they'd left off over a decade ago. After he checked in at the Great Lakes, he visited the restaurant where his ex-girlfriend waited. He told her he was staying at a nearby motel. "Come on by," he said. "We can go out and talk about the old days. Then we'll take it from there." But she wasn't interested in rekindling anything. He cruised past his childhood home, saw it surrounded by a fence that had never been there before. All of his friends were convicts, and they were either dead or in jail. He sat in his motel room, staring at the floor. On the morning of February 9, he stuck a gun in his waistband and drove his rental car into Niles, to the BMO bank.

Before he was sentenced, Wally had a chance to address the court. Both McLeese and the judge had noticed that Wally no longer had the same broken, fraught demeanor of a year ago. He'd had a change of heart, in fact: He no longer wanted to spend his remaining years in jail. Perhaps he'd come around to this new way of thinking because he was no longer wandering alone in the wilderness. He was in familiar surroundings again—jail cells, prison buses, courthouses—and they steadied him. And he'd created a strong bond with his lawyer. He considered "Rich" a friend, giving him two finely wrought pencil sketchings. One was of an ancient and deeply wrinkled Peruvian woman, the other of a plump African woman wearing glasses. All in all, Wally seemed more composed, less dusk-haunted. "Your Honor, as far as my lawyer and the prosecutor, they're both right. Okay? I've had one heck of a life. And this thing about me—I don't want to die in prison. All I want to do is try to be like normal people. I want to get in a retirement home and do my paintings. I've been an artist all my life." He apologized for his crime and told the judge he would go along with whatever medical supervision she ordered, if that's what it took to have some years outside.

This time around, the judge made sure that Wally would have help when he got out. She added three years of supervised release to his sentence, the maximum allowed, with the special provision that he receive mental-health treatment the entire time.

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ONE DAY LAST FALL, I drove down to the trailer park in South Carolina. Wally thought I was nuts to go there—there's nothing to see! But I wanted to get a look at the place that was worse for him than prison.

The trailer park had a gravel drive off a hilly, swerving two-lane road. Wally's trailer sat at the very end of his lot, up against the woods. As soon as I stepped out of the car, his neighbor came out to talk to me, a slim, brown-haired woman whose eyes glistened with concern and curiosity in equal measure. Wally had told her and her husband that he had property in Hawaii where he and some friends were at this very moment building a restaurant. They didn't believe him, because if you had that kind of money, why'd you end up here? He got a dog while he was here, she said, a little Chihuahua that he named Taco and gave to her daughter when he high-tailed it out of there.

She liked Wally, she said, but he shouldn't have been living alone. One day, after the hip surgery, she found him sitting on the ground,

Taco yapping and scampering around him. Wally couldn't get up. Over the months, his trailer became increasingly cluttered and dirty. It got so bad, she wouldn't even go in there anymore. Then there was that early-morning phone call to her husband, oh, about 5 A.M., with Wally saying that a truck full of circus animals had pulled up next to his trailer and a fat lady in a wheelchair was parked on his front porch. Hallucinations happen to a small percentage of dementia sufferers; they can be caused by dementia plus infections or medications or vision problems. Wally had cataracts, so maybe that and the early-morning hour, the dim light—both intensifiers of the disease—made things worse.

When I got back to New York, Wally and I resumed our phone calls. He always called after lunch, when the phones weren't too crowded. We talked of everything, it seemed:

He told his probation officer he was living like a hermit and compared it to being "in the hole"—solitary confinement.

his getting asked to leave school in tenth grade (too many fights), his dad's stroke, his mom's cancer, horse racing, Rembrandt. Everything, that is, except the dementia. He didn't bring it up, and I found myself unable to, either. How do you ask a person about that? Sometimes I could tell his brain had suddenly failed him. My question would be followed by silence. As the seconds ticked by, that silence seemed to be plunging swiftly downward, and I could feel him perched and teetering on the edge, but then he'd throw out something, not quite an answer to the question but not too far off topic.

Then, one day, I got a call from him without his usual jolly greeting: "Yello! How ya doing, girl?" He had something to tell me, he said. "We must be near the end, aren't we?" he asked, referring to our interviews. "I got something I want to tell you at the end of everything. It pertains to my life now, okay? I've got—See, if I keep talking, I'm gonna tell you."

"Why don't you tell me, then?"

"Uh, because it's very, very, very personal. I mean *very* personal, but... I don't want you to mess it up, because I want it at the end of the story. It's got to go at the end, okay?" With that, he took a ratchet breath and let it out in a deep sigh. "I got dementia. I don't know if you know what that is. It's a form of Alzheimer's, okay? It comes and goes. I don't know how to say it, but I hide it a lot. I can hide it pretty good. That's what I try to do. Most of the time, it's in the mornings. In the mornings until about ten o'clock, it gets a little awkward for me."

Just that morning, he'd gone to clear his tray after breakfast, and he'd managed to put the tray away, but then he'd stood there with his cup and spoon and couldn't figure out what to do with them; he had open trapdoors in his thought process. Another prisoner had come up and—saying nothing more than "Hey, Pop, what's up?"—quickly showed him what to do. "And then I went right to it. It was *bam-bam!* and I was out the door," Wally said. "But once

in a while that happens, and that really kind of worries me."

When I gingerly asked if he has any hallucinations, he laughed. "No. Uh, no." But then he said, "I can sit at the end of my bed for an hour looking at the floor not thinking, nothing. *Nothing*. Then I click myself out, and most of the day, like I am now, I'm very alert, very alert. I'm all right, I'm back to normal." I told him cataracts can cause hallucinations, but as soon as they're fixed, the visions go away.

"See, when I was in the trailer, I'd go blind," he said. "You know how you put venetian blinds down? It would just go dark, and I could see about a tenth of an inch underneath it, and I'd try to look underneath to see where I'm at. And about ten minutes later, it comes back up and I'm clear again."

I was astonished at what he was living with. Alone. In a South Carolina trailer park where no one really knew him and the hours and days had no structure, no horizon, no familiar sights and sounds; all markers, lost. After my trip south, I pretty much understood Wally taking off toward "home," whether that home was the Chicago suburbs of his youth or the company of an old squeeze or the most familiar place of all to him: a prison cell. He was like a battered old boxer shaking his head and pawing at his eyes, trying to get clear again. Trying to see right, think right. The dementia belonged at the end of the story because it wasn't him; it was something that happened *to* him. Like old age, for those of us who make it that far. He was still, at 73, working on his identity; he was a criminal, yes, but not a thug; a marshmallow, but don't take that marshmallow stuff too far.... He was a free man who wanted to be locked up, a prisoner who decided he wanted to be free; old age, dementia, even maybe this writer, were forcing him to define a self at the very moment when that self was disintegrating.

"I don't want this to change your opinion about me," he said.

"Nah," I replied. "I think you're brave."

One time, Wally told me that the first four or five years were the hardest of any sentence. "After that, it's nothing, just nothing. It's like you living outside there." You create your own routine, and before you know it, that routine has ferried you through weeks, months, years. This four-year stint was like a blink of an eye for Wally, and he was thinking a lot about what he'd do when he got out. At first, he wanted only to rent a small house in the Chicago suburbs where he could spend the remainder of his life painting. He'd like to meet a good woman, too. But as the weeks rolled by and he seemed to grow more cheerful and expansive with every conversation, he started dreaming a little more: "I want to see stuff I never paid attention to. I want to go see the lake. I want to go to the zoo, okay? Because I can draw some of them animals." He wanted to return to the Art Institute of Chicago. He hadn't been there in years. "I want to take advantage of this, because it will never happen again, okay? I'll never get another chance." He was—at 74 years old, locked up in a federal pen with a bad hip, a bum knee, high blood pressure, and creeping dementia—Hope Incarnate. ☒

KATHY DOBIE's last article for GQ, "The Undeclared Champions of Defeat City," appeared in the May 2014 issue.



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sometimes make fun of people who have faith, how they had a good feeling about me. I told them I wouldn't make fun of them, least of all for having faith. I told them I was, in fact, now running late to get home in time for Sukkot, which was beginning that evening.

"You know," Carl said. He had taken off his T-shirt and now was just wearing a tank top and gold chain and drinking water, and every tattoo on his arms saluted me. "People always forget that Jesus was Jewish." Joel and Laura nodded.

"Jews don't," I told them, and I laughed, but I was the only one.

And I came back the next week and the week after, and one Sunday morning after what I had thought would be my last time in church, I woke up and felt a strange and unexpected bodily need to put my hands in the air, this need to be in a room where people frantically worried about the soul, to hear from Carl that he most definitely had answers to all the questions. I told my husband I was short some reporting and I headed out to Montclair.

THE FIRST TIME I went to church, I was 14 and I went with my father, who had begun accompanying his girlfriend. It was a Catholic service, and so we were asked to kneel, which I knew from attending an actual Orthodox yeshiva on weekdays was not a thing that Jews were really supposed to do. My father whispered to me that he eased his guilt by saying the *Aleinu* under his breath, and maybe I should try this, too. He also whispered that perhaps my mother should never know about this. Years later, I mentioned this in casual conversation with a Hasidic rabbi I knew, and he told me that this was the easiest explanation for why I had continued to resist religion: I had let my soul become infected by a place that I was not supposed to go, and which had made it so that I would not submit to laws that alternately bored and appalled me. Makes sense, I nodded.

What that rabbi didn't know was that my soul had already been infiltrated prior to that day in church with my father. Just the year before, I'd been in the parking lot of a Bob's Big Boy on a Saturday night after a movie, about six of us waiting for one of our parents to pick us up in a minivan. We sat on the turbarriers in the empty lot, and a woman in her twenties approached us. She crouched down at our level, and I remember not a single detail of her appearance, only that she was squarely appropriate for 1988 in a Long Island parking lot. She told us that she saw what a good time we were having, and it made her feel so good to see us having a good time. She told us that, hey, it might be that we don't always feel this way. And she wanted us to know that when

that happened, there was God, and we could reach out to him and he would be there. We nodded the polite nod of eighth graders and we tried not to smile or laugh until she left, which she did, as soon as she'd told us her message. That was it. There was no pamphlet, no address, no follow-up. No hat. But now, in my memory, I recognize her as warm and guileless in that Hillsong way. Only years later did I realize she was a Christian. But there in the dark, once she finally walked away, we laughed at what a loser she was.

I have been to an ultra-Orthodox camp. I attended a Hasidic high school for a year before everyone agreed that it was a terrible idea. I did the remainder of my sentence at a Modern Orthodox high school. I have immersed in a mikvah. I have climbed Masada more than once. I have stuck notes into the cracks of the Western Wall. I have fasted on Yom Kippur. In the throes of postpartum depression, I sat on a bathroom floor and begged God for peace, not quietly but loudly, my husband on the other side of the door holding our baby and asking if he should call someone, if maybe we needed to get some help. I didn't realize it at the time, but in that parking lot, I was having the most religious experience I would ever have in my life. I think about that woman all the time.

PASTOR CARL and I met at The Corner, a café in Montclair where he is a regular presence. Carl wore a black tank top, a gray sweatshirt worn *Flashdance*-style (collar chopped, tank-top straps exposed), the gold chain, some silver wrist cuffs, a gold Rolex passed down by his grandfather. His sweatpants were pushed up to just below his knee. It was raining, but it wasn't cold. He walked in and spent a few minutes talking to the servers about their lives. Over the course of my time with Carl, what was most striking to witness was how grateful people were simply to be asked how a struggle is going, how good it feels to have someone to share in the pain of the answer.

So let's get to it: Abortion breaks his heart. He had just seen the #ShoutYourAbortion hashtag—women on Twitter sharing the circumstances of past abortions and their refusal to feel badly or be quiet about it—and he was thinking that he'd like to meet the woman who started it, because he wanted to understand why she would campaign for such a thing. I told him that it wasn't a celebration of abortions—that it was a campaign for rights, that women shouldn't feel shamed for choosing what to do with their bodies.

He said, "If you sit down with me and you say, 'Carl, I'm having an abortion,' I'm going to say, 'I think that you can have this child. I don't know how hard it's going to be. I could never imagine. I do know that my prayer is that God will give you peace to stand on this side with me. Should you choose another option, I will not turn my back on you. I will not vilify you. I will not hate you. I will not, I cannot, live your life. I love you regardless, but my prayer is that somehow, some way, you will see my view on this.'"

Pastor Carl doesn't like that he's considered a bigot simply because he doesn't share the views you tend to find in blue-state big cities—that you can be gay, you can abort your fetus, you can do whatever you'd like with your body, really. He's happy to discuss about

it, but he doesn't like being challenged on this by people who don't believe in the God of the Bible, because how could they possibly understand why he's reached these conclusions if you're not starting from the same place? He says that if he could just show a person how to walk with Jesus, really walk with him every day, it would be easy to resist the temptation of loving someone of your own gender. But, Carl begs me, don't miss the point: It's important to him that we know that everyone is welcome at his church—that homosexuality isn't a different kind of sin to him than, say, tithing at 9 percent instead of 10 percent, or gossiping or telling a lie. Everyone should feel welcome at Hillsong.

And everyone is, but with footnotes. Earlier in the year it came out that a male leader of the New York choir was in a committed and celibate Christian relationship with a male singer in the choir. Whether or not this was an open secret within the church is not completely clear, but when it came out publicly, Joel's father, Pastor Brian, was forced to clarify out loud that, yes, the church is against two men in a relationship.

"These two men in particular are amazing human beings," Carl continued, and he starts to cry at this, at how painful this was for everyone involved. He is an easy crier, and the memories are hard for him. "And they are going through a really amazing journey called life. Yes, their sexuality is involved with it, but it's not as cut-and-dry as you think it is. And if they make a decision to live as gay men, they are going to get married, our stance in this church is there's going to be a limited involvement when it comes to leadership, because you don't believe what I believe. This would create friction that wouldn't be fair to the people that we're serving. If you believe that homosexuality is God's will for your life, and I disagree, well, what if you're a leader and, you know, a young man comes up to you, and he has questions about his sexuality? What are you going to tell him? What I believe or what you believe?" He paused to make a quick phone call, and he told whoever was on the other end that his phone was running out of juice and also that he wanted a Diet Mountain Dew. Within 15 seconds, a pastor named Diego delivered the soda, plus a phone charger, from a black Suburban a few feet away that I hadn't even realized was there and idling for the hours of our interview. His phone rang again, and it was his wife, he knew, because her special ringtone is "Hotline Bling."

While he and Laura spoke, I tried to reconcile the man with genuine love for humanity with the man who believed that it would be dangerous for a faithful Christian to head the choir he loved because he also happened to love another man.

When he hung up, I asked about my grandmother, who was the most wonderful woman in the world, who escaped from Kiev minutes before the massacre of Babi Yar and who became a successful architect. I asked if she is in heaven, because she was Jewish. I asked about Gandhi, if he is in heaven. I asked about Frank Houston, if he is forgiven. And the answer is yes, so long as they accepted Jesus, because Carl has to believe that Jesus appeared to each of them at the end of their lives and that in those final minutes, they were saved.

But he'd still rather not have said any of this. His concept of Jesus is a man who goes after

the soul, who changes behavior through leadership and enlightenment. "Religion"—Carl does not like that word—"goes after behavior modification, and then if we get around to it, maybe we'll talk to your soul. And this is killing people. So I always want to talk about things bigger than sexuality, and in our culture I get why it's such a huge deal. I get why people want to make us have bold, big statements, but I don't believe it's working."

So make no mistake: He does not believe Jesus wants people to be gay. He does not believe Jesus wants women to get abortions. But more than any of that, he only believes those are the headlines of your life. They are not your story. Your sin is not the biggest part of you, no matter how much it might feel that way.

And here I have to say out loud how much I like Carl. I say it here because I still felt it after this conversation. I like him even though he is ideologically opposed to things that are important to me. I somehow could not fault Carl for his beliefs, because they torment him. I couldn't fault him for them even though his influence is so vast and all it would take was a word from him to heal the suffering of so many people who feel like they're without a tether. I couldn't dislike Carl because in the end his belief is an organism outside reason. It's Carl who will take my jokes about how Christianity seems so much easier than Judaism and follow them up with 200-word texts in which he tries to use this toehold to tell me his Good News. He is so worried for my soul, and this should annoy me, but instead it touches me, because maybe I'm worried about my soul, too, and Carl wants so badly for me to enjoy heaven with him. How can I fault someone who is more sincere about this one thing than I have ever been about anything in my life? But on the other hand, if there's one thing that's true about Christianity, it's that no matter what couture it's wearing, no matter what Selena Gomez hymnal it's singing, it's still afraid for your soul, it still thinks you're in for a reckoning. It's still Christianity. Christianity's whole jam is remaining Christian.

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IN LATE OCTOBER, Carl and I got into a black Suburban outside his house, en route for Madison Square Garden, where the Knicks' home-season opener would tip off in a few hours. Carl was dressed in head-to-toe Saint Laurent, and I was still in head-to-toe Gap.

Carl baptized Kevin Durant a few years ago, and obviously there's Tyson Chandler, and Carl himself played college basketball at NC State. When we got to the Garden, everyone from the food-service people to the Knicks players to their coach, Derek Fisher, to some of the Atlanta Hawks players sought a minute with Carl. They would come over to say hi. Each time, the conversation would start with a shy handshake, perfunctory and awkward. And Carl would face the guy fully and lean his head in a few centimeters, and still the guy would be smiling, and eventually, each time, the guy's face would collapse ever so slightly as the ministering began. The conversations rarely lasted more than five minutes.

Coach Fisher caught Carl's eye from the court, where the Knicks were practicing, and the two grabbed a pair of court-side seats. He and Fisher leaned over their legs, their forearms against their thighs, hands folded,

staring ahead. They were talking intensely. At this exact moment, Fisher was in the New York tabloids because of a very real drama—a falling-out with his ex-teammate, Matt Barnes, over Barnes's estranged wife, with whom Fisher was rumored to be involved—but if that was the subject of their conversation, Carl would never tell me. After ten whole minutes they hugged and fist-bumped and parted ways.

Carl sat with me and showed me his phone, a text exchange with a well-known NBA player that went back several weeks. It started with the guy saying how great it was to meet him that night in Florida, and then he asked if maybe Carl wanted to join him later at the club. Carl said thanks and made a joke about Florida women and clubs, and the guy laughed back, not really realizing you shouldn't ask pastors to clubs. They went back and forth a bit more until Carl managed to get his question in, which was something along the lines of "Where are you at now with your faith?" and the guy answered, and suddenly the text exchange was about this guy and his life and his soul.

"See," Carl told me. "This is how it works. You take those opportunities." This is what cool gets you. An audience with people with big audiences of their own.

Carl and I stared straight ahead. I told him that I felt like I was introduced to a very complete version of God as a child and that when that happens, so young, before you can even really think, you can't ever picture a world without God again. People will tell you you're an idiot for believing in God, but what they don't understand is that it's like trying to imagine the world without air: You can do it for a second, but then the image falls apart. Carl nodded and smiled. *Exactly*. This was what we had in common, only I was vexed by it, and it gave him life. I wanted to tell him then that I feel lost lately, that sometimes I felt this overwhelming sense that I'm not tethered to anything real, but I didn't, because I know Carl has just one answer to that question, and I already know what it is.

Maybe at that moment I was close to salvation and was ripped away by the Devil, whispering into my ear about how I've already opted in so hard to my own religion, paid my synagogue dues and paid for Hebrew school. And maybe that was the Devil whispering in my ear, telling me not to ask.

Then again, you shouldn't always ignore the Devil. Sometimes the Devil has valid things to say. What if the Devil whispers in your ear and reminds you that most of current Christian doctrine was decided not by Jesus but at the Council of Nicea almost 300 years after Christ's death? Or the Devil might point out that if Christ died so we didn't have to submit to Levitical law, meaning we can shave our heads, we can have tattoos, then maybe that could extend to things that are truly important to a person's essential happiness and ability to survive in this terrible, lonely world. The Devil might suggest that if you can back down from your whole biblical inerrancy thing in order to let women lead—because the Bible does clearly say that women shouldn't—then surely you could blur your eyes and see that Jesus never actually said anything about gays or abortion.

And if you still thought you had a leg to stand on here, the Devil might even offer to introduce you to some of the wives of "cured homosexuals" and ask you to ask them how they're doing, if their marriages feel authentic,

if their husbands aren't suicidal. And the Devil will whisper in your ear and tell you keep your fucking laws off my fucking body, and yes, the Devil is the Devil, but even a broken clock is right twice a day.

• • •

I TOOK A DRIVE last week, and on the radio I heard that Justin Bieber had walked off a radio show, then walked off the stage of his own concert in Oslo when he became agitated by some liquid on the stage, and later he posted a statement saying he's human and he's working on it, which I already knew, and I thought of him on his knees, praying to be reborn, and I hoped his fans forgave him, and also that they got a refund.

The last time I saw Pastor Carl, we stood in the driveway of his home and said our final good-bye, and he put his hand on my shoulder and told me that he just knew the Lord would lead me in the telling of the story of Hillsong. He asked that I get it all right, that I also make sure that the people understand that these were some difficult matters he had difficult opinions on, that he was trusting me to tell everyone the message: that if we all knew Jesus, if we really knew him, we would understand these opinions, too. That no opinion he holds should prevent them from seeking peace at his church, where they are welcome and already loved. But that if we had these same opinions, we could live good lives and we would live here in God's Kingdom on earth. What could be better than that? he wanted to know. What could be better than the life he had presented to me? I promised him I'd tell the whole story, that I'd do my best, and he told me that his church would be my church and his church family would be my church family, and I pressed my lips together and nodded and didn't say anything because I was crying then. We hugged, and I wiped my eyes on his motorcycle jacket, which was covering the same chest Justin Bieber had cried into that day, and it made a leather-on-leather sound when he hugged me back.

The next day I attended synagogue for the naming of a friend's new baby, and I sat while the rabbi was talking, and I wondered what any of us were doing here, what anyone was doing anywhere, why our belief in things we couldn't see made us superior to people who had faith in different things we couldn't see. I left the synagogue and went on with my life and I thought that maybe it would be a long time before I ever looked organized religion in the face again. I should have known that my faith was not strong enough to endure examination, that it was too primitive and not sophisticated enough, and I was sad and sorry that I had asked it to withstand what it wasn't capable of.

And that Sunday, I did not go back to church, because my story was done, and instead I went to soccer games with my children and ordered a pizza, and at the end of the evening, I cleaned the kitchen and I bent down to place dinner plates into the dishwasher, and as I did I hummed Hillsong's music to myself, and then I straightened up suddenly, struck in the pit of my stomach with a grave sense of loss, and I looked out the window into the dark nothing and I realized that I missed them all very much. ☘

TAFFY BRODESSER-AKNER is a *GQ* correspondent.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63

You're 30. And I don't think, I said, people generally understand about marriage until they're 30. You're waiting for this perfect relationship with no problems. And by 30, when that hasn't happened, you think: Oh, maybe that's not real.

"Yes, absolutely," J.R. says. "That's exactly what happened. If I'm going to be miserable, I'd rather be miserable with her than anybody else."

You're a true romantic.

"Hahahahaha!"

Could it be that J. R. Smith is finally contented? *I have a deep question, I say to J.R. What did you think your career was going to be like when you came into the NBA out of high school? Age 19. First round of the draft.*

"It's like on Christmas. And you write your Christmas list out. And you're going to get everything. And then you get clothes. Where's my lightsaber? Where's my G.I. Joe with the kung-fu grip? And it's not even wrapped like that, in the big red-white-and-green Santa Claus snowflakes. It's paper like how you used to wrap your books from school."

This is surprising. Because driving toward the three lonely skyscrapers of downtown Cleveland, he does not sound contented. He sounds kind of hopeless.

How do you feel about your career at this point? I ask.

"Disheartened, honestly. Yeah, for sure."

But it's not just that Cleveland fans are spiritually destitute. It's that Cleveland loves its sports stars like no city that has lots of other things to love could.

By now we have pulled underneath the Q, and J.R. is distracted by the car he's parking behind. A futuristic white BMW i8 that neither of us has ever seen before and seems to run on sunlight.

"Wow, whose the fuck is that?" J.R. says. "It's gotta be Bron."

(The parking-garage guy says it's 'Bron.)

I don't know if everything they say about how LeBron is the real G.M. of the Cavs is true. But it is a team that he's built. Everyone around LeBron knows he is lucky to be here, anointed.

"You would never go out and party on this team," J.R. says in the midst of telling me how much he loves Cleveland, what an *underestimated city* it is. "Once you're on a team like this, you're just so locked in. When you see

someone like LeBron in the gym around the clock? Usually it's the guys who want to get better so they can get more playing time who are always in the gym. But if you've got four MVPs, two championships, two Finals MVPs..."

Is there a sense of expectation from him?

"Oh, for sure. If you're here for any other reason than to get better and help us win, then you're here for the wrong reason. And he'll tell anybody that—he doesn't care. You could be mad at him or whatever. If you're not here to win? Time for you to go."

People are always writing stories about how this year J. R. Smith is finally growing up. He keeps telling us he's turning a corner, and his mistakes seem so correctable because they're the mistakes of someone with impulse-control problems, not an evil heart. And then he keeps making them. But I don't know, I kind of think this is the time and place when J.R. will, as at a dinner party at Megan Feller's, be loved and love back. Because Cleveland loves its athletes like no other city (except, like, Milwaukee and Minneapolis and Indianapolis and probably other 'apolises). Because you know the nightclub J.R. will be accused of choking a man next to in New York next week? They don't have that kind of nightclub in Cleveland. J. R. Smith, Cleveland will say, you're a little crazy, but you're *our* crazy.

You have to understand what it's like to be a fan in Cleveland. Yes, Cleveland never wins. Anything. Ever. But it's not just that Cleveland fans are spiritually destitute. It's that Cleveland loves its sports stars like no city that has lots of other things to love could. I mean, until LeBron came back, the most beloved sports hero in Cleveland was Joe Thomas, J.R.'s neighbor, who is a *left tackle* on a terrible football team. Remember, after "The Decision," when the people of Cleveland took to the streets, lost their ever-loving minds, rended their garments, cried into their pie-grogies, and burned their LeBron jerseys? And everyone was like *LeBron will never be welcomed back here!* What a misinterpretation. That was like a guy who's going out with the hottest girl in his high school, and then she breaks up with him, and then he rips up the painting she made for him in the middle of the cafeteria, being all dramatic in a self-sabotaging effort to get her back. *Of course you left, LeBron. Everyone leaves. We're not allowed to hope for nice things. We hate you we never wanted you. P.S. Give me a call sometime?* I think this is exactly the kind of place where J. R. Smith might find contentedness.

When J.R. was telling me about how his career was the shittiest Christmas in history, I asked him to perform an exercise: *Write the story of the end of your career for me.*

"Well," he said. "The beginning didn't turn out too well."

Right, but what do you want to happen at the end?

"Hopefully just win a championship. I'd like to get greedy. But just one."

Does it matter what your role is in it?

"No," he said. "As long as I'm a part of it."

Anything else? I asked.

"I guess if I could write my ending, it would be: 'Even though he was a quote-unquote knucklehead, he finally got it right.'"

DEVIN FRIEDMAN (@devinfriedman) is GQ's director of editorial projects.

Pages 26–27. Left, denim jacket: Levi's. Check jacket: vintage. Hat: his own. Center, jacket: Boss Orange. Right, shirt: Billy Reid. Location: The Showbox.

Page 28. Sneakers: Diemme. Clothes and jewelry: his own.

Pages 36–37. Stylist: Michael Nash. Hair and makeup: Johnny Hernandez for Fierro Agency. Bra and panties: GemPicket at OuiHours. Vest: Elizabeth and James.

Page 68. Bracelet, \$1,200; rings, from left, \$450 and \$495: all by David Yurman. Jeans, \$230: Rag & Bone Standard Issue. Belt, \$135: The Kooples. Bandanna: 10 ft Single by Stella Dallas, Brooklyn. Camera: Canon (strap: Arnuvo).

Page 69. Blue bracelet, \$80: Miansai. Tangerine wristband, \$150: Fitbit. Leggings, \$150: Nike. Backpack, \$249: Porter.

Page 70. Tie, \$95: Todd Snyder. Tie bar, \$15: The Tie Bar. Pocket square: Ivy Prepster.

Page 71. White turtleneck, \$125: J.Lindeberg. Gloves, \$40: Burton. Knit hat, \$55: Chamula.

Page 72. Turquoise bead necklace, \$159: Degs & Sal. Bottom two bead necklaces, \$295 each, and braided bracelet, far left, \$165: Giles & Brother. Khaki jacket (on bag): Visvim.

Page 73. Bandanna: Polo Ralph Lauren. Bolo tie, \$68: The Quality Mending Co., N.Y.C. Ring, far left, \$296: LHN Jewelry. Ring, right, \$35: Diesel. Jeans, \$248: J Brand.

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VOLUME 86, NO. 1. GQ (ISSN 0016-6979) is published monthly by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, One World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. S. I. Newhouse, Jr., Chairman Emeritus; Charles H. Townsend, Chairman; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., President & Chief Executive Officer; David E. Geithner, Chief Financial Officer; Jill Bright, Chief Administrative Officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001. Canada Post: return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

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Jeter's Retirement Plan Is Looking Good



It's hard to say exactly

what the secret ingredient was to our shoot with 25-year-old model Hannah Davis—she of *S.I.*'s swimsuit cover and those talking-horse DirecTV ads. Maybe it was the Caribbean glow. (She's actually from St. Thomas. Like, she went to St. Thomas High School or something.) Maybe it was the Derek Jeter—issue engagement ring—it looked like a space rock, and she said “Thanks!” when we said “Wow!” But we believe it lies in GQ's advanced garment engineering. Witness here the sawed-off sweatshirt, executed with a nod toward the age of Jazzercise (you'll know it as the '80s). It's just the latest in a series of breakthroughs in shirt minimization—see also the bisected tee of our Beyoncé cover (February 2013) or the vivisected soccer shirt from our famous-models-in-Rio shoot (June 2014), and on and on. GQ: Pioneering tasteful under-exposure since 1957.

PEGGY SIROTA



Bye





Happy
New
Gear

Image simulated. Availability of watch face design may vary by country.

SAMSUNG Gear S2



All images simulated. Availability of watch face design may vary by country. Additional watch bands sold separately.

Hi

